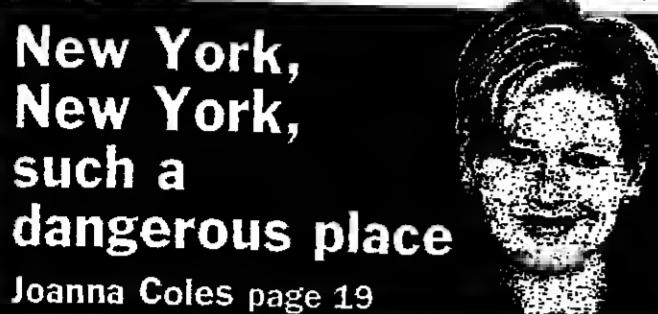


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Europe seeks new President

Demand for radical reform splits North and South

FROM CHARLES BREMNER IN BRUSSELS

EUROPEAN leaders embarked on a search for a new European Commission president yesterday after Jacques Santer infuriated many of them by defiantly rejecting the charges of political failure that brought the resignation of the whole Brussels executive.

Compounding the political turmoil raging across the 15-nation bloc, a humiliated Mr Santer claimed angrily that the verdict of incompetence by an external fraud inquiry was a shocking travesty. "This picture is distorted. I consider the tone of the report's conclusions to be wholly unjustified," he said.

He was matched by an unrepentant Edith Cresson of France, whose misconduct accelerated the Commission's downfall and was pilloried by the inquiry. She insisted that she had no regrets — although French support for her appeared to be evaporating.

But Mr Santer's hopes of clinging to his job were all but destroyed as Gerhard Schröder, the German Chancellor, began sounding leaders on possible successors at the start of a tour of all 15 EU capitals that had already been planned to pave the way for a crucial pact on spending reform in Berlin next week.

And the Commission's performance brought instant attack from Britain's two commissioners, Sir Leon Brittan and Neil Kinnock. Mr Kinnock was appalled at the way the Commission appeared to think it was "business as usual", his spokeswoman said. Evidence for his view was on display as senior officials tried to ignore the political rubble in their headquarters and played down the crisis as a mere impediment to their business of running the Union's affairs.

Sir Leon accused Mr Santer of carpings, saying: "I do not think this is the time to carp and cavil at the content of the report. The time for talking and political controversy is over. What is now needed is comprehensive root and branch reform."

Sir Leon and Mr Kinnock are among a number of outgoing commissioners who were not personally tainted by the fraud report and are likely to be reappointed. But, with Mr Santer pushing hard to stay



Javier Solana: joint favourite

on as head of a caretaker team, there was a clear geographical divide over the rest of the Commission and its leader. Pressure for rapid change came mainly from northern governments, while Italy, Spain and other southern states indicated that they could accept a caretaker administration.

This reflected a widespread view in the Mediterranean that the Commission had fallen victim to a self-righteous crusade by northern politicians. Massimo d'Alema, the Italian Prime Minister, said that he was "worried about the Commission's resignation at such an important time for Europe's future." And Ramon de Miguel, Spain's Economy Minister, said that an unnecessary crisis had been triggered by a "lack of solidarity" with the Commission by political groups in the Parliament.

In glaring contrast, the Governments of Denmark, Sweden, Finland and The Netherlands hailed the Commission's rout as a chance to purge a discredited system. Sweden said it would not reappoint Anita Gradin, its Commissioner, who was in charge of fraud investigation in Brussels.

The only outright backing for Mr Santer came from Luxembourg, his home state and the EU's smallest member. "Luxembourg stresses that all

pressure for a swift replacement of the Brussels team also came from the European Parliament, whose rout of the Commission has enshrined it as a formidable new force in EU affairs. José-Maria Gil-Robles, the assembly president, said the Santer team "must leave now and not in nine months' time". And Pauline Green, the British Labour MEP who leads the dominant Socialist block, said: "We have the opportunity to create a better Commission for the next millennium."

DEFIANT to the end, Edith Cresson yesterday echoed the words of Edith Piaf when she said: "Je n'ai pas de regrets."

The former French Prime Minister also told France 2 television that she had no need to clear her name since the Com-

mission had been found collectively responsible. "There was misfunctioning like in any administration," she said.

However, Mme Cresson's hauteur will be remembered as the catalyst of the catastrophe.

Some of her colleagues are now barely on speaking terms with her, believing she could have saved them by sacrificing herself in January. By this week, it was too late.

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However

Blair manages to wound even after forgetting his s-word

After lunch yesterday — and before his Commons Statement on the resignation of the European Commission — we can imagine Tony Blair pacing his office floor, wrestling with an intractable problem.

He had his text before him. He was stuck on the second paragraph: "The Committee of Independent Experts set up last January on a Motion from the Socialist Group in the European Parliament

Yet again, he took a run at this. "The Committee of Inde-

pendent Experts set up last January on a Motion from the So... So... So... No. He just couldn't get it out. Beads of sweat lined his brow.

He tried again. "I set up last January on a Motion from the S-S-S-Soc..."

A helpful aide intervened. "Try saying it in two halves, Prime Minister. You can surely say 'social' if you change the context. Think 'social occasion': think Islington dinner party."

Mr Blair tried this. "Social, social..." — yes, so long as he kept those mental champagne

corks popping, the word was easy.

"Now say 'ist' Prime Minister. Think 'ist-ambul'."

"Ist," barked Blair.

"Now try the whole phrase, Prime Minister."

"... set up last January on a motion from the Social... Social... S-S-S-Socialista..."

"... Damn! Can't I just say 'Labour'?"

"But Prime Minister, it isn't the Labour Group of the European Parliament. It includes other countries. They're the Socialist Group."

"Look — hell — yknow —

MATTHEW PARRIS
POLITICAL SKETCH

I'm praising these guys. How about "Third Way Group"?

"Or could I say 'New Labour'?"

"Regrettably, Prime Minister, these terms do not exist in the party nomenclature of the Parliament. You'll just have to try to say 'Socialist'."

"But Prime Minister, it isn't the Labour Group of the European Parliament. It includes other countries. They're the Socialist Group."

"... set up last January on a motion from the Social... Social... S-S-S-Socialista..."

"... Damn! Can't I just say 'Labour'?"

"But Prime Minister, it isn't the Labour Group of the European Parliament. It includes other countries. They're the Socialist Group."

"Look — hell — yknow —

breath... Labour Group of the European Parliament."

"Uh-oh. Tories hooted. Bearded Labour lefties bristled. Madam Speaker smiled.

But frankly Blair didn't care. The occasion was going his way. It went his way throughout. Even critics have to admire the way he turned round what had looked like a bad day for Europhiles.

The Eurosceptics had arrived cock-a-hoop. Ho-ho! Not so jaunty now Pierre!

Where are all your macaroni

airs and graces now, eau-de-cologne-reeking garlic-eaters?

old man suggested. William Hague decided to present Blair's response as inadequate.

Had he heard Sir Edward he might have thought better and called it pie-in-the-sky.

Responding, Blair mentioned Jacques Santer and, looking straight at Hague, snorted that the Tories were making a habit of appointing compromise candidates who seem like a good idea at the time".

Ouch. For all who believe that nemesis does not follow hubris, that was a corker.

Inquiry told of hospital records chaos

By IAN MURRAY, HEALTH CORRESPONDENT

A PICTURE of administrative chaos at a hospital that was supposed to be a centre of excellence began to emerge yesterday, the first day of the marathons public inquiry into the Bristol children's heart operations scandal.

The £15 million inquiry, the longest and most comprehensive to be held within the National Health Service, was ordered by Frank Dobson, the Health Secretary, after the General Medical Council hearing into the deaths of 39 of babies at Bristol Royal Infirmary and Bristol Children's Hospital.

The inquiry, in an office block in Bristol, takes over from the point where the GMC left off last June, when it found the heart surgeons James Wisheart and Janardan

Dhasmana guilty of serious professional misconduct for carrying on operating on children even though they knew too many were dying. Wisheart was struck off; Dhasmana was censured and has since lost his job. The hospital's chief executive, John Roylance, was also struck off the medical register for failing to stop what was going on.

Over the next 18 months the inquiry, which is being chaired by Ian Kennedy, professor of health law, ethics and policy at University College London, will look into more than 2,000 operations on children at the hospitals to try to find out what went wrong and to learn lessons that can be used to improve healthcare throughout the NHS. The op-

erations led to death or brain damage for more than 150 infants.

However, records are so poor that the inquiry still does not know exactly how many operations were performed between 1984 and 1995. Information was stored by a number of methods, and the computer used to collate them was stolen. None of the official logs is complete. Consequently, the inquiry will rely heavily on evidence from parents whose children were operated on.

In his opening address, Brian Langstaff, QC, counsel for the inquiry, said the aim was to get at the truth so that wider lessons could be learnt and recommendations made to improve health care in the NHS.

Getting the facts accurately would be difficult because a number of different systems had been used in different periods for different procedures by different individuals. He said a television documentary in 1987 suggested without any hard evidence that things were going wrong. This had been denied in the programme by Mr Wisheart, using his own figures. "In the past a non-specific allegation backed up by no figures was met by figures which in themselves are controversial," Mr Langstaff said.

"Neither approach is good enough for this inquiry."

At the moment if there is a problem, such as the Bristol heart deaths, there was no clear method of either identifying it or reporting it, he said.

The watchdog, called the Commission for Health Improvement (CHI), is expected to be formed later this year.

Mr Dobson said his aim was not to establish a "blame culture" that would antagonise doctors, "but to spread good practice".

Hospital chief executives will now be held responsible both for the budget of the hospital and the quality of medicine.

The inspection system, detailed yesterday by Frank Dobson, the Health Secretary, will establish the first national watchdog for medical standards. Mr Dobson said the new guidelines would also make hospitals legally responsible for high-quality care. Mr Dob-

son added: "Frankly I was astonished that there were no standards — hospitals were obliged to live up to, nor any mechanism in the NHS to make sure that they did."

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JACK STRAW announced a three-year, £170 million plan yesterday to tackle high crime rates by extending the use of closed-circuit television and focusing police resources on crime-blighted areas.

The Home Secretary said that part of the money would go towards improving security in the worst housing estates. Local councils and housing associations will be able to bid for cash for projects to re-

duce social exclusion by improving security in town centres and housing areas.

New CCTV systems will be installed in housing estates, towns, bus and railway stations and particularly car parks. Mr Straw said: "About £20 million has been allocated for next year, £60 million for the following year and £70 million in the third year. "In the right context CCTV can significantly reduce crime and disorder," he said.

"It is like having a number of police officers permanently on the beat in particu-

lar streets, with eyes in the backs of their heads and an incontrovertible record of what they have seen," he told MPs during a Commons debate. "CCTV can deter criminals, greatly assist the police and others in bringing offenders to justice and to help reduce people's fear of crime."

Mr Straw will announce the first 11 areas in which a Government initiative to target policing will be trialled. Next month he will announce the first 60 areas to benefit from a £50 million anti-burglary scheme. Police stations, page 10

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Eton boy hanged in fainting game

Inquest told that 15-year-old took search for strangulation 'buzz' too far, reports Helen Johnstone

BOYS at Eton regularly played a "fainting game" that involved two of them tightening a dressing gown cord around the neck of a third, an inquest into the death of a 15-year-old pupil was told yesterday. When the boy being "hanged" stopped tapping his thigh, that was the signal that the desired state of unconsciousness had been reached.

The inquest into the death of Nicholas Taylor was told that he had decided to continue playing the game on his own. He was found on February 22 hanging by a towelling cord from his bedroom door.

A pupil told the hearing, at Windsor, that up to ten boys in Baldwin's Boc House at Eton, the school attended by Princes William and Harry, had tried the game between 70 and 100 times over a two to three-week period before dropping out.

Robert Wilson, the East Berkshire Coroner, said: "I have been sitting in this court for 28 years and I thought I had heard everything. How have I been?"

"The fainting game, in my language attempted strangulation, taking place between boys who are some of the cream of our society and probably of above average intelligence, why? What words spring to mind? Crazy, mad, stupid? What on earth were they thinking of? What would be the inevitable outcome sooner or later?"

The inquest was told that Nicholas, from Esher in Surrey, had demonstrated his method of self-strangulation to fellow pupils but had never carried it out in front of them. One pupil said Nicholas fainted most nights — the game was played between supper and prayers — sometimes up to three times. He said: "He seemed to



Nicholas Taylor: game started by accident

want to do it when he was under pressure with exams etc." Several boys described getting a "buzz" out of the game. Others said it did nothing for them but relieved the boredom in the free time before prayers.

A pupil from Baldwin's Boc said that the fainting game had started by chance after Nicholas had "tried to strangle" him last November with a jumper. "We had been fooling around. I fainted and then came round. We told everyone what had happened and people were curious to see if he could do it on purpose."

They had successfully "fainted" another boy and it had gone from there. "After the first night it happened pretty regularly every night with six or seven boys being fainted each evening over two to three weeks."

He did not think there was anything evil in the practice but decided to stop after both his mother and the biology master at Eton said fainting was bad for people.

The pupil who had acted as the guinea pig said he was "fainted" about ten times and

had to do the same to others. "I witnessed faintings between 70 to 100 times over a few weeks." Asked why he did it, he said: "I'm not sure. It was different, not pleasant or unpleasant."

Asked if it had ever crossed his mind that someone could be strangled, he said: "Yes, slightly but not seriously." He said he did not worry about being caught. He did not believe Robert Topham, Baldwin's Boc House Master, would approve but did not "think he would take a strong line".

The boy said that Nicholas, whose parents, Liz and Malcolm, were at the inquest, had first indicated he would try to "faint" himself by tying his dressing gown cord to the met-

al door closer after other boys had refused to help him. "If no one was going to do it to him he would do it himself."

Mr Topham told the inquest the fainting game was generally carried out when he was having supper. He accepted that the boys had taken advantage of his absence. He had been "astonished" to find out about it and that he had not heard of the game until Nicholas' death.

Recording a verdict of misadventure, the coroner said it was clear that Nicholas wanted to continue fainting on his own. "He was doing what he intended willingly to do and it went wrong."

He said he found it difficult to criticise Eton College, whose staff could only do so much to look after the boys in their care. "Yes, they had an absolute duty, they are *in loco parentis*, but there is just so much they can do and no more. They are not prison officers." He could not see how the housemaster or senior prefects could have done more.

In a statement released after the inquest, John Lewis, Eton's Head Master, said Nicholas' death, which was an outright tragedy for the Taylor family, had also touched many people at the college.

Those who were his friends or closely involved with him or who were caught up in the circumstances of his death have been greatly affected. The chief sympathy of everybody at Eton remains with Mr and Mrs Taylor and Nicholas' sister and brothers."

Mr Lewis said that since it had emerged that eight to ten boys in Baldwin's Boc were involved in induced fainting, House Masters had spoken to their boys in the strongest possible terms about the importance of not doing such things or allowing others to do them.

He emphasised that the coroner had said that he could not see that the House Master or the senior boys could have done more.

Nicholas's parents, Liz and Malcolm Taylor, yesterday

Care that makes houses a home

By JOHN O'LEARY, EDUCATION EDITOR

THE pastoral system of care at Eton, based on 24 small houses, has been a feature of the school for generations. The choice of house and housemaster was the crucial factor in the decision to send Prince William and Prince Harry there.

Each of Eton's 1,200 boys has three adults looking after his welfare: a housemaster, a tutor and a dame — the school's term for a matron. Boys are also invited to consult two school doctors, five chaplains and a part-time counsellor.

The centre of school life is the house, where the housemaster and dame have the principal charge of a boy's welfare. Both are readily accessible and visit boys in their rooms in the evening. A senior boy acts as house captain, helping to maintain discipline and keeping the housemaster informed.

An inspection report by the Headmas-

ters' and Headmistresses' Conference last year described the house system as an "important and impressive feature of Eton". The inspectors said: "Housemasters are immensely caring and knowledgeable about their charges."

"They are people of authority of presence, yet possess a very personal touch without being overbearing."

All boys have their own study bedrooms, providing a degree of privacy unknown in some boarding schools but also making constant supervision impossible. Although there are common rooms, social-

ising in the evenings often takes place in individuals' rooms.

Eton has had a series of highly publicised drugs cases but the HMC report was complimentary. "This is a civilised community of pupils who respect one another's independence and live together equitably. The overall ethos of the school is such that pupils generally feel secure in school and have confidence that any incidence of bullying is dealt with swiftly and effectively," it said.

The coroner seemed to endorse those findings at the inquest. He concluded that, although it was surprising that the boys should have engaged in such dangerous practices, he could not see that the housemaster or senior boys could have done more. "There is just so much they can do and no more. They are not prison officers."

Mrs Bleasdale, senior nurse, at a nursing home, told the professional conduct committee of the General Medical Council that Ken Taylor had ordered her to stop the woman's food supplement and curtail her fluid intake. She made clear she would refuse.

Mary Ormerod, 85, who had suffered several strokes, was taken off the supplement Fresubin on June 29, 1995, and died 58 days later at Oxford House, Preston, weighing 3st 12lb. Mrs Bleasdale, who was deputising as matron, said that Dr Taylor

had asked her to accompany him to the room where the bedridden Mrs Ormerod was lying. He told her he had been approached by two of her daughters and then outlined his instructions while averting his gaze from the worried nurse.

She told the hearing: "He said he had been approached by two people. They were members of the family. He said they were both very distressed at their mother's ongoing situation ... that they were struggling with the fact that her condition was not getting any worse and they had dis-

closed it. He said he wanted Fresubin stopped and her fluid regime to be curtailed from 200mls every two hours to between 20 and 50mls."

Mrs Bleasdale protested that the weather was "scorching" and that a reduction in fluid would soon cause dehydration in anybody. "I was horrified. I expressed my horror. I asked him to clarify exactly what he had said. He clarified it and he said that it was the 'quantity versus quality of life' in question. After he had repeated his instructions I asked if what he was saying was in fact euthanasia

and, if so, what he was saying was illegal. His next comment — I thought it was grotesque. He said, 'it's not as if she is going to do much'."

Mrs Bleasdale said she asked the doctor to accompany her to the office and made clear she would play no part in carrying out his instructions.

"I emphatically said I will make no change in my own approach and that if he wished to make any written changes he should accompany me to the office and write in her care plan that I would not be a party to it."

Dr Taylor, 51, denies serious profes-

and was very determined to give up so he wouldn't be put in the same situation again.

"I don't think he could believe [the operation] had stopped at the last minute and I don't think he could face going through it all again."

He went back on the waiting list at the Royal Brampton Hospital in London where he had more tests in June but died in the November."

Mr Gibson had a history of health problems. He had smoked 20 cigarettes a day, but cut down to five when he needed the operation.

Mrs Gibson, of Alton, Hampshire, said: "He was so nervous about the operation

and was very determined to give up so he wouldn't be put in the same situation again.

"I don't think he could believe [the operation] had stopped at the last minute and I don't think he could face going through it all again."

He went back on the waiting list at the Royal Brampton Hospital in London where he had more tests in June but died in the November."

The settlement with the health authority was reached without any acceptance of liability. A spokesman said: "The trust rejects allegations that this patient was refused treatment. His operation was deferred until he gave up smoking because the risks of operating while he continued to smoke were considered too high by the doctors."

"The decision ... was backed by the British Medical Association."

Simon Clark, a spokesman for the smokers' group FOREST, said: "Smokers are entitled to the same care and compassion as non-smokers. We can only hope that this case emphasises the considerable financial penalties which hospitals may face if they fail to treat smokers equally."



Andrea and John Gibson, who was refused a bypass



Taylor: denies misconduct

Senior nurse rejected doctor's 'suggestion of euthanasia'

Acting matron left job after confrontation, reports Michael Horsnell



Bleasdale: senior nurse

A NURSE yesterday described her horror when a doctor in charge of an elderly patient had allegedly suggested euthanasia.

Jane Bleasdale, senior nurse, at a nursing home, told the professional conduct committee of the General Medical Council that Ken Taylor had ordered her to stop the woman's food supplement and curtail her fluid intake.

She made clear she would refuse. Mary Ormerod, 85, who had suffered several strokes, was taken off the supplement Fresubin on June 29, 1995, and died 58 days later at Oxford House, Preston, weighing 3st 12lb.

Mrs Bleasdale, who was deputising as matron, said that Dr Taylor

had asked her to accompany him to the room where the bedridden Mrs Ormerod was lying. He told her he had been approached by two of her daughters and then outlined his instructions while averting his gaze from the worried nurse.

She told the hearing: "He said he had been approached by two people. They were members of the family. He said they were both very distressed at their mother's ongoing situation ... that they were struggling with the fact that her condition was not getting any worse and they had dis-

cussed it. He said he wanted Fresubin stopped and her fluid regime to be curtailed from 200mls every two hours to between 20 and 50mls."

Mrs Bleasdale protested that the weather was "scorching" and that a reduction in fluid would soon cause dehydration in anybody. "I was horrified. I expressed my horror. I asked him to clarify exactly what he had said. He clarified it and he said that it was the 'quantity versus quality of life' in question. After he had repeated his instructions I asked if what he was saying was in fact euthanasia

and, if so, what he was saying was illegal. His next comment — I thought it was grotesque. He said, 'it's not as if she is going to do much'."

Mrs Bleasdale said she asked the doctor to accompany her to the office and made clear she would play no part in carrying out his instructions.

"I emphatically said I will make no change in my own approach and that if he wished to make any written changes he should accompany me to the office and write in her care plan that I would not be a party to it."

Dr Taylor, 51, denies serious profes-

sional misconduct for allegedly ordering staff at the home to starve the patient and let her "slip away". Some staff defied him and continued to administer Mrs Ormerod's prescribed supplement until the supply ran out.

Mrs Bleasdale, who unexpectedly left her job at the nursing home four days after the meeting with the doctor, said that over preceding months there had been no significant change in the patient's condition, that she retained her ability to swallow and communicate by squeezing the nurses' hands. Mrs Bleasdale said that the doctor had not asked her views on Mrs Ormerod's condition.

The case continues.

Now boarding, Gate closed, Now boarding, Gate closed, Now boarding, Gate closed

COMMISSION IN CRISIS



Hans van den Broek
Former Soviet Union,
East and C. Europe
The Netherlands

Untainted.
His department has,
however, been the subject
of widespread criticism
over mispent aid
to Eastern and Central
Europe.



João de Deus Pinheiro
Africa, Caribbean and
Pacific
Portugal

Accused of nepotism.
The report concluded:
"It would have been
prudent if he had not
appointed his own
brother-in-law."



Padraig Flynn
Employment and
Social Affairs
Ireland

Untainted.
Mr Flynn has, however,
been seriously damaged
by revelations that he
accepted cash
contributions for his
party's elections
campaigns.



Marcelino Oreja
Institutional Affairs
Spain

Untainted.
Once described as the
prototype of a
"super-annuated
commissioner."



Anita Gradin
Immigration and
Judicial Affairs
Sweden

Untainted.
Response: "We have to
accept, even myself, some
of the criticism.
But it's a bit ironic that
we were the first
Commission to try to
clean things up."

Cresson is damned over dentist crony

By CHARLES BRENNER
AND SUSAN BELL

EDITH CRESSON is the only Commissioner accused of nepotism — for having employed her long-standing dentist friend, Dr René Berthelot, in a fictitious post on a contract investigators called "manifestly irregular".

Charges against the Commission went far beyond Mme Cresson's fondness for appointing friends to important jobs and her indifference to abuses by subordinates, but it was her refusal to accept any blame before Parliament's inquisitors that set in motion the events that led to the independent auditors' devastating report. For many MEPs, the

high-handed manner of the late President Mitterrand's one-time favourite symbolised all the sins that they saw in the Commission's culture of unaccountability.

Monday's report vindicated that view, damning her not only over her dentist friend, but also for, in effect, lying to Parliament and President Santer over an emerging scandal in the training administration she headed.

The majority of missions the dentist undertook on Mme Cresson's instructions were to Chatellerault, where the French Commissioner was Mayor until 1997, leading investigators to conclude that they could be considered "proof of the fictitious nature of his tasks". Out of 17 business trips, 13 were to Mme Cresson's fief, where he spent at least 41 days in the town at EC expense. The investigators found that he had barely 24 pages to show for 18 months' work, during which time he was paid Fr390,000 (about £39,000).

His meagre documentation, described in the report as "vague", never revealed properly the reason for his visits. In a letter to Dr Berthelot on July 26, 1995, offering him a six-month contract with the Commission as a "scientific adviser", no specific mission was

mentioned, despite EC instructions to the contrary. The letter refers to his "spontaneous application" for the post, despite his having been employed at Mme Cresson's request. His contract was extended until August 31, 1996 and again until February 28, 1997. When asked about his role by Parliament budget inspectors last October, Mme Cresson said: "As a politician, it seemed absolutely legitimate to call on external advisers, some of whom I know well."

As an exercise in self-destruction, the blunt-spoken socialist, could hardly have done better than blame all her

troubles on "a German-inspired bid to damage France". In a belated attempt to deploy her uncontested charm with politicians and journalists, she sat in her Brussels flat recently, elegant in a silk trouser suit, and confided astonishment over "a mysterious and murky plot" to do her down.

Mme Cresson became France's first woman Prime Minister in May 1991 — and during a stormy ten months held the dubious distinction of being the most unpopular of the Fifth Republic.

There was speculation that M. Mitterrand's relationship with the fiery redhead went beyond mere friendship. When he ditched her in 1992, she blamed a "macho plot".



Cresson said that attacks on her were part of a "murky" German-inspired plot to damage France

Gravy train trundles on

By CHARLES BRENNER

RETIREMENT DEALS
golden handshake, if paid in full, would amount to about £300,000 per Commissioner for the period of the next three years.

Although service for a full five-year term is normally required to qualify for full pension rights, it is thought that the outgoing team will enjoy most of the usual benefits. Under staff rules, a departing Commissioner gets 22.5 per cent of final salary for life, which amounts to nearly £30,000 a year.

Commissioners are also eligible to receive half their £125,000 basic salary for three years, to enable them to readjust to normal life. On top of that they get allowances of up to £6,000 a year to cover their families. The total for the



Berthelot: 24-page report took him 18 months

□ Javier Solana: Spanish former Foreign Minister is favourite. His widely held belief that the job should go to a socialist from a southern European state.
□ Romano Prodi: Italian former Prime Minister admired for enforcing rigour required to enable Italy to qualify for euro membership. But as a centrist politician he may not be socialist enough.
□ Antonio Guterres: Said to be one of Tony Blair's favourites. The Portuguese Prime Minister is an exponent of the New Labour-style "third

way". He says he does not want the job.

□ Giuliano Amato: Italian former Prime Minister. Hampered by ties with Bettino Craxi, the exiled socialist leader wanted by the police.

□ Felipe Gonzalez: Spanish socialist former Prime Minister is tainted by scandals over anti-terrorist death squads.

□ Wim Kok: Dutch Prime Minister says he does not want the job. But his candidature may please Germany. Dutch economy has emerged as a healthy left-wing model, with low unemployment.



EXPOSED!

The barbaric treatment of dogs in Asia.

WSPA has uncovered gruesome practices in Asia's factory farms, where dogs are bred to meet the intense demand for pets. The dogs are crammed so tightly into cages that their limbs are intertwined. Disease and starvation are rife. Some have their vocal cords cut to reduce noise. Many end up slaughtered for meat by being electrocuted or even skinned alive. WSPA is working to end these barbaric practices and introduce stronger animal protection laws throughout Asia. But we desperately need your support.

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Mario Monti
Internal Market
Italy

Accused of nepotism. Report found that the appointment of her dentist friend to a Commission post was a clear-cut case of favouritism. Response: "I have no regrets."

Untainted. Disliked for criticising colleagues. Seen as bad appointment

Accused of nepotism. Report found that the appointment of a friend to a Commission post "bordered on inappropriate procedure". A former trade unionist and unlikely to be renominated.

Untainted. Response: "By doing what we did last night we made a clean break. It will lead to firmer management."

A respected economist who has advocated streamlining welfare and subsidies.

Sober North beats EU's siesta South

FROM ROGER BOVES
IN BONN

WHEN Gerhard Schröder, whose presidency of the European Union looks pretty much out of control, held talks with Tony Blair in London last night, they naturally discussed a Third Way manifesto which is supposed to set out a modernising brief for Europe.

Mineral water was drunk. As in Herr Schröder's trip to Denmark, Sweden and Finland, a sober time was had by all for the Protestant North is celebrating a moral (though probably pyrrhic) victory over the Catholic South.

The collapse of the European Commission represents — if one is to believe the Germans and the Swedes and the Dutch — a triumph of Sierra focus group social democracy over siesta socialism.

There is a grander way of explaining events in Europe. Carolingian Europe, represented by the likes of Jacques Delors, Helmut Kohl and François Mitterrand, is giving way to a Europe more concerned with good housekeeping than compelling vision.

The old joke about a visitor gazing up at the Berleymont building and asking: "Who

EUROPEAN

works there?" — answer: "about 20 per cent of the inhabitants" — probably had a 9th-century equivalent.

Now that Protestant bean-counting prime ministers have replaced Catholic leaders, the Franco-German Rhineland axis has never looked weaker and the rich are wondering why, in the absence of a big European idea, they should be paying for the South when their real strategic interests seem to lie in the East.

From the beginning the European Union was something like an extended Sicilian family. Its social dynamic was built on favours, horse-trading and a steady flow of cash. The family survives because it shares its prosperity and is always ready to expand. The stronger members of the family protect the imbecile child or the unmarriageable daughter.

The critical figure in the hierarchy is the mother, a conciliator who feeds, arbitrates, redistributes and keeps a rough emotional balance in the family. In Europe-as-family, the Commission played the role of mama, the great dispenser of favours. Plainly the south Eu-

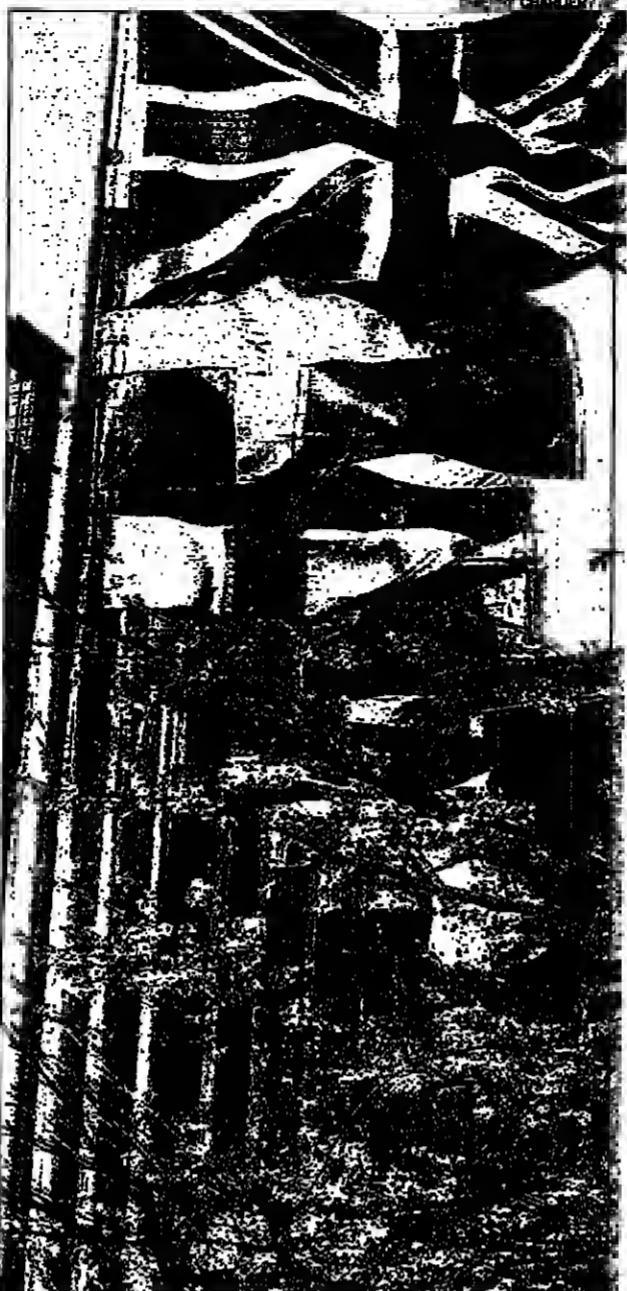
ropeans saw little wrong with the Commission that created networks of allegiance; a Commission post was the lucrative reward for wrong-footed politicians and their primary job on arriving in Brussels was to hand out lucre to friends and allies. The divide, however, is crumbling, as is the family metaphor.

In Germany everyday culture has become closer to the old Club Med clichés. Trains never run on time, craftsmen are sloppy, the delivery schedule for a new bed is typically five weeks with no certainty as to when the furniture will arrive on the doorstep.

Bribes and backhanders have become part of the civic culture.

The price of a driving licence in Frankfurt, according to an investigation, is a 1,000 mark (£33) bribe for a motorbike licence and 2,000 marks for a lorry licence. In Berlin, Frankfurt or Munich one can jump the queue for a council flat with a bribe of 6,000 marks.

Tony Blair comes to Aachen in May to pick up the Charlemagne prize for European statesmanship. He might care to reflect on the rotten state of the Union.



Spring blossom among the national flags outside the European Parliament building in Brussels yesterday

Shake-up in Europe was 'absolutely right'

□ Britain: Tony Blair told MPs at Westminster it was "absolutely right" for the Commission to have resigned *en masse* after the report revealed a "sad catalogue of negligence and mismanagement". Ministers want to reappoint the two British Commissioners, Sir Leon Brittan and Neil Kinnock.

□ Germany: Bonn, desperate to keep a grip on its flagging presidency of the European Union, is urging its partners to keep the present Commission in place until after June's elections to the European Parliament. It fears that the Berlin summit on March 24 to overhaul Europe's finances will be derailed.

□ France: Press reaction focused on the downfall of Edith Cresson — "Shameful Cresson" said *France-Soir*.

□ Ireland: The collapse of the EU Commission provides the Irish Government with a perfect excuse for removing Padraig Flynn from office. Mr Flynn, the former EU Social Affairs Commissioner, is a source of embarrassment as he faces allegations of receiving £50,000 in secret payments from a builder.

□ Italy: Commentators combined relief that the two Italian EU Commissioners had been "absolved" of fraud, nepotism and corruption with anxiety over the future fate of European integration.

□ Spain: The official Spanish response was muted, principally because the Foreign Minister, Abel Matutes, was singled out for criticism for

his period as a commissioner. Manuel Marín, the Spanish vice-president of the Commission, was deemed to have been cleared of allegations of nepotism and failing to deal with corruption, although his wife remains a member of his staff.

□ Portugal: The Government said that João de Deus Pinheiro, in charge of relations with Africa and the Caribbean, will go when the new Commission is announced. Senator Deus Pinheiro has employed his wife and his brother-in-law at the Commission.

□ Finland: The Prime Minister, Paavo Lipponen, whose country assumes the EU presidency in July, welcomed the resignation of the Commission members.

□ Sweden: The Prime Minister, Göran Persson, said the

THE CONSTITUTION

Legal experts in Brussels and European Union capitals have cast doubt on the treatise of Rome, Maastricht or Amsterdam, and the revised version of the EU's constitution, written by the European Parliament, will be formally rejected, however, by MEPs next October, unless a majority of the entire Commission then agrees that the governing institution under it, absolutely clear that none of the Commissioners can be reinstated as commissioners, and that an entirely new Commission must be chosen. The argument turns on which article in the Treaty of Rome and the amendments in the new constitution.

Commission Office officials told the *Times* that the new constitution, which they believe to be a "good document", will be rejected.

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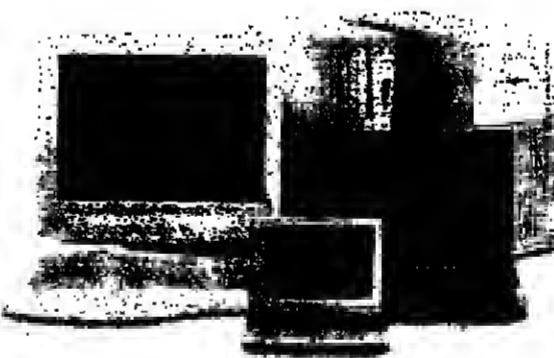
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SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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COMMISSION IN CRISIS



Blair says merit must decide who gets the top jobs

By ROLAND WATSON
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

TONY BLAIR last night proposed sweeping changes to the personnel, management and culture of the European Commission as he used the power vacuum in Brussels to press the case for reform.

The Prime Minister handed his plans to Gerhard Schröder, the German Chancellor, in Downing Street last night in the hope that they would be tabled for debate at next week's Berlin summit. Downing Street and Foreign Office staff have been working on the proposals for some months, but seized their moment yesterday after the mass resignation of the 20 European commissioners on Monday night.

In a Commons statement, Mr Blair told MPs the proposals were designed to deal with the "systemic failings in the commission" which he said had been tolerated for too

long. His officials stressed that reform, and speedy reform at that, was critical to repairing the credibility of the commission. The Prime Minister's official spokesman compared the Brussels bureaucracy to "Lambeth council in the 1980s".

Mr Blair himself highlighted the way senior officials were appointed as one of the key areas. "The top jobs should go to the top people," Mr Blair told the Commons. "Merit and merit alone should decide." His comments were aimed at the quota system which tries to share senior posts around the 15 member states.

At the two top levels, the 229 posts are shared out roughly according to population. Britain has seven grade A1 officials and 23 at grade A2, the same as Germany, whereas Greece has two and six respectively and Finland has one and five. At other levels the quota system is less rigid, but remains semi-official.

In contrast, the British proposals stress the need for transparency at all levels, and appointment based on a proven ability to do the job.

As part of a "new contract" between the commission and the Council of Ministers, the paper includes proposals to make director-generals, the senior civil servants who head each of the commission's departments, much more closely accountable for their department's record.

The report which sparked the mass resignation of commissioners highlighted the lack of responsibility among officials for either their budget or the effect of their department's measures. The British paper suggests that Brussels adopts a relationship between officials and the Council of Ministers similar to that in the UK where Whitehall permanent secretaries are accountable to Parliament.

The British plan would also slim down the Brussels bureaucracy, particularly at senior level, over a number of years. Mr Blair told MPs: "There will, no doubt, be those who see this as just another chance to bash Europe. Interestingly seen, this is in fact an opportunity to make changes which many of us believe and have argued are long overdue.

Simon Jenkins, page 20
Leading article, page 21

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- All senior appointments to be made on merit, and not according to the semi-official quota system which seeks to ensure that all 15 countries are fairly represented.
- Top civil servants to be directly accountable for the performance of their departments.
- An independent fraud office with full powers of investigation.
- Stricter guidelines on the awarding of outside contracts.
- Stricter employment contracts, making it easier to move or dismiss underperforming officials.
- A complete overhaul of the approval and auditing of the commission, coupled with a new system for financial management and spending programmes.



Tony Blair and Gerhard Schröder outside 10 Downing Street yesterday, where the two leaders met for talks

Inherent flaws may prevent reform

Peter RIDDELL
ON POLITICS

Tony Blair talked tough over the European Commission. That was both right in itself and politically necessary. Far-reaching changes are required both in the leadership of the commission and its structure. But can Mr Blair deliver?

In the past, the commission has brushed aside charges of fraud and mismanagement. Responsibility has been evaded, the sums involved have been dismissed as trivial and blame has been shifted to member countries.

Unusually for a European document, the latest report is clearly written and blunt. The indictment against Edith Cressida for favouritism and for failing to act in response to "known serious and continuing irregularities" is damning. Jacques Santer's errors

were of omission rather than commission. But he is criticised for neglect and his attempt to shrug off responsibility was pathetic.

The new President must, in Mr Blair's words, be a political heavyweight. The European leaders may appoint a high-quality replacement this time in response to the crisis.

However, the system of appointing commissioners is inherently flawed. As long as nominations of commissioners are made by member states and the allocation of portfolios, including the Presi-

dent, results from haggling among heads of government, merit will come a distant second to domestic political factors. Who has to be rewarded, fobbed off, etc? Mr Blair has rejected any change in the system of nomination.

The Prime Minister made a number of sensible and overdue suggestions about improving methods of financial control and management. Some can be implemented quickly without treaty changes.

Reform of multinational organisations is, however, never straightforward, as has been shown at the UN in New York and its various agencies. Appointments and promotions are fixed in relation to national quotas, to ensure that states, particularly smaller ones, have a "fair" share. That works against giving "the top

jobs to the top people". In a perverse way, the European Commission, like the UN, represents careful balancing of various national interests rather than the nucleus of a European super-state where national identities do not matter.

Changing the culture will be hard since any criticism of a senior official can be presented as an attack on any member country.

Mr Blair argued that this time his call for reform had echoes across Europe. It may have in the short term. But the latest upheavals — and Mr Blair's response — have raised the stakes. Reform of the commission has now become a crucial part of the Government's campaign to convince the British public of the advantages of Europe ahead of the referendum on the euro.

Hague seeks new code of conduct

COMMONS DEBATE

By JAMES LANDALE
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

WILLIAM HAGUE demanded a binding code of conduct for the appointment of senior officials within the commission yesterday.

Replies to Tony Blair's statement in the Commons, the Tory leader welcomed the Prime Minister's proposals but said: "Will you consider adding to your list a binding code of conduct to prevent personal appointments of commissioners and to stamp out nepotism, and an agreement that the Parliament should be allowed to sack individual commissioners guilty of misconduct?"

At present, the Parliament can demand the resignation of the entire commission. Mr Hague added that a declaration of financial interests should be established for individual commissioners.

John Major, the former Tory Prime Minister, said: "What this report throws up is an institutional problem that has long existed in the EU. Isn't one of the most important reforms, many years overdue, a clear-cut financial accountability by the commission ideally to the member states of the EU or to a body that reports directly to the member states?"

Sir Edward Heath, the former Tory Prime Minister, said that the most important thing to recognise was that it was "the first time the European Parliament has been prepared to act decisively. Things will never be the same again."

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Hope fades for new breed of 'loser lads'

BY ADAM SHERWIN

BRITAIN has produced a class of "loser lads" who believe they will fail at school, work and life, a survey claims. Although magazines aimed at young men, such as *Loaded*, promote a world of consumer-based fun, the real experiences of "lads" are very different.

Teenage boys are struggling to make a mark on a society that places increasing value on the skills of women, says the study from the *Tomorrow's Men* project supported by Oxford University. As a result, more are drifting into crime, and may contemplate suicide.

The survey was based on anonymous interviews with 1,400 males, aged 13 to 19, from across Britain. The aim was to understand their hopes, worries and experiences by asking them about parents, school, work and gender equality. The study, funded by the clothing retailer Topman, found that many adolescents had low self-esteem, which was illustrated by lack of confidence, self-motivation or optimism. The absence of a father, or a father figure, was key to starting this process.

Schools in which teachers ignored the problems of boys and failed to implement an anti-bullying policy exacerbated negative feelings. Such boys, who fall into a category called "Low Can-do" in the report, amounted to 12 per cent of the sample. Of them, 20 per cent have been in trouble with the police. 17 per cent are deeply alienated from school and 11 per cent are depressed or even suicidal.

Boys in this group often respond to their predicament and the success of young women by over-emphasising "macho" behaviour in front of women. They also find it hardest to accept women's emerging equality at work and at home and may try to encourage girlfriends to give up their aspirations.

The survey also found that



Some of the teenagers who took part in the survey, which found that many suffered from low self-esteem. Only a quarter felt optimistic about their prospects

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Denise Lewis with her MBE insignia: "When I saw the Queen there was this wave of emotion — I didn't know what to say"

Athlete adds MBE to her medal haul

BY A CORRESPONDENT

THE athlete Denise Lewis was as nervous receiving the insignia of her MBE from the Queen yesterday as she was when on the starting line at a championship.

"I calmed myself down as I was waiting but when I saw the Queen there was this wave of emotion and I didn't really know what to say to her," she said at Buckingham Palace.

The gold medallist in last year's European and Commonwealth heptathlons said her honour was "beautiful and fantastic". She was accompanied by her mother, Joan, her grandmother, Edna, and her boyfriend, Jonathan Kron.

Miss Lewis, 26, said she was training hard to achieve her goal of a gold medal at the Sydney Olympics next year.

The actress Maureen Lipman, who was appointed a CBE, said the occasion had lifted her spirits. "I was feeling rather ill on the way here and thought I wouldn't be able to go up and get the award. I told my mother she

would have to go up instead and she said she would but only if she could wear my hat. But it's amazing how getting a CBE can cheer you right up," said Miss Lipman, 52, who received the award for services to comedy and drama.

Also with her were her daughter and her husband, the playwright Jack Rosenthal, who in 1993 was appointed CBE. "We are now a two-commander family — we should be looking for a frigate," the actress joked.

The former England football captain and Newcastle United player Stuart Pearce received the insignia of the MBE. "The Queen seemed to be very knowledgeable about football but she didn't mention if she was a fan," he said.

The broadcast journalist Trevor Phillips, 45, who was appointed OBE, said it was remarkable how "unstuffy" the investiture was. Nicholas Serota, the director of the Tate Gallery, was knighted for services to the visual arts.

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Time is up
for the
traditional
lunch hour

By ALEXANDRA FREAN
SOCIAL AFFAIRS
CORRESPONDENT

THE traditional lunch "hour" is disappearing from the working day as more employees say they are too busy to take a break.

A study, published today by the British Heart Foundation, says that the culture of long hours dominant in the workplace is putting excessive pressures on people's health, depriving them of rest, relaxation and exercise and making them fat.

More than half of workers surveyed said they took less than 30 minutes for lunch. Women are the most pressured, with a third saying that they did not have a lunch break at all.

More than a third of the 659 between 25 and 50 said they believed that work was adversely affecting their health. Of these, nearly a third said that they had gained weight because of their job.

Ladies enter the Long Room



Winning team: Jackie Court, Sheila Hill, Rachael Heyhoe Flint, Netta Rheinberg, Norma Izard, in the front row, and behind them, Diana Rait Kerr, Carole Cornthwaite and Audrey Collins, in the Long Room yesterday

The male preserve at Lord's falls
as the MCC names its first women
members, reports Claudia Joseph

TWO former England cricket captains strode into the Long Room yesterday when the first women members of the MCC entered that hallowed hall of Lord's.

The club, which last year finally voted to admit women to its ranks, yesterday named its first ten honorary women members. Eight were at Lord's yesterday, including Rachael Heyhoe Flint, who led the national team for ten years, and Carole Cornthwaite, captain in the 1980s. Betty Archdale, who 65 years ago captained the first England women's touring team to Australia and New Zealand, is also among the ten.

Mrs Heyhoe Flint, 59, recalled that the late cricket commentator Brian Johnston had predicted yesterday's achievement. She said: "I might be referred to as the catalyst because in 1991 I had the temerity to apply to become a member. I wish Johnnies was here today because he kept saying to me: 'It will eventually happen, but I doubt whether I shall see it in my lifetime.' This means as much to me as when I played here for the first time in 1976 against Australia."

The ten, chosen by a sub-committee, also include Sheila Hill, former chairman of the Women's Cricket Association Umpires and Scorers Sub-Committee; Diana Rait Kerr, former curator of the MCC

museum; Netta Rheinberg, former secretary of the Women's Cricket Association; Edna Barker, former captain of South of England; Audrey Collins and Norma Izard, former presidents of the association; and Jackie Court, capped for England 40 times.

Many names had been considered, said Roger Knight, the MCC secretary, and no one disputed that the ten should be members. Mrs Cornthwaite, a senior coach and England Under-21s selector, who took a record 25 catches in Test matches, said she had had no idea she was to be admitted.

The arrival of women at Lord's marks the culmination of a long campaign by Mr Johnston and Sir Tim Rice to admit female members. Yesterday Sir Tim said it had taken time to win people round. "I never wanted to steam in and say — you have to do this. The MCC has an image of crusty old chaps, but it's not."

MCC members will also be allowed to invite women guests to matches. The first MCC women's team will take to the field on May 11 in East Molesey, Surrey. Lord Cowdrey of Tonbridge, the former England captain, said: "I think it's a wonderful day and I look forward to the day when the MCC ladies team makes a big impact in the game."

President's welcome, page 46

NEWS IN BRIEF

Molester
GP cleared
of rape

Jurors cleared a family doctor of raping a girl of 15 yesterday, then gasped when they discovered that he was awaiting sentence for molesting her. At Manchester Crown Court, Dominic Jackson, 47, who ran a surgery in Adswood, near Stockport, had admitted indecent assault but opted to face a jury on the more serious charge. The jury was not told of the guilty plea until Maurice Greene, for the prosecution, stood by the court once they had delivered their verdict. Sentence on Jackson, who now lives in Slough, Berkshire, was adjourned for reports.

Hidden treasure

A little-known Georgian mansion has been voted Britain's favourite historic house. Penarrow House, near Bodmin, Cornwall, is the home of the Molesworth-St Aubyn family. It was honoured in the National Heritage Awards.

Art sold as scrap

A £250,000 working sculpture by the late Rowland Emett, *A Quiet Afternoon in Cloud Cuckoo Valley*, which was stolen from a warehouse in Hertfordshire, was recovered when a dealer reported that he had paid £100 for it for scrap.

Health crust

A former butcher whose pork pies helped to make him a millionaire has left most of his £6 million estate to Doncaster Royal Infirmary and Montagu Hospital NHS Trust. Fred Green, 95, had sold his business to Asda.

Buyers promise to live with peals

By SIMON DE BRUXELLES

THE buyers of 12 expensive homes being built in a south Devon village will be required to sign a pledge promising not to complain about the bells of the 13th-century All Saints Church less than 50 yards away.

Parish councillors in Thurlestone in South Hams mounted the pre-emptive strike against the city folk likely to snap up the £345,000 houses because local people were worried that they might have unrealistic expectations of peace and quiet.

After Rock in Cornwall, Thurlestone is the most expensive resort in the South West. One resident said: "There is a very exclusive golf club and in the summer there are more big industrialists there than at the CBI conference."

Buyers of the three new homes and the nine converted from cattle sheds must endure 90 minutes of bell-ringing practice every Thursday evening, as well as peals during Sunday services, weddings and funerals.

The special clause was written into the deeds of the new homes at the request of the parish council and the parochial church council, and will bar all future owners from taking any legal action against the bells.

Derrick Yeoman, a parish councillor who has been a bell-ringer all his life, said: "There have been many cases of people moving into the countryside and then complaining about the noises or smells."

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MICHAEL MOORE: THE AWFUL TRUTH

REVIEWED BY STEPHEN COLEMAN

FBI to oversee Ulster bomb investigation

THE RUC has taken the unprecedented step of asking an English police officer and the American FBI to oversee the investigation into the car-bomb murder of Rosemary Nelson in order to counter republican allegations of RUC collusion.

David Phillips, Kent's Chief Constable, is to head the investigation and late on Monday night Sir Ronnie Flanagan, the RUC's Chief Constable, contacted Louis Freeh, the FBI director, to invite FBI participation. The FBI's exact role has yet to be decided but it will contribute independence as well as expertise.

Sir Ronnie is determined not only to track down the killers of the prominent lawyer, but to dispense the Sinn Fein charges that the RUC was itself party to the murder. He said that there would be no constraints placed on Mr Phillips and that his investigation would not only be "the most meticulous it can be, but transparently obvious as such".

The Red Hand Defenders, a loyalist splinter group, has claimed responsibility for the murder but Sinn Fein spokesmen continued to accuse the RUC of collusion yesterday and mounted demonstrations outside police stations.

Sinn Fein has been cam-

Outsiders enlisted to meet need for a transparent inquiry, report

Martin Fletcher and Ian Brodie

paigning furiously for the RUC to be disbanded. It seized on Mrs Nelson's past claims to have been threatened by RUC officers and said the RUC had rejected her request for protection even though her work for high-profile republican clients made her an obvious target.

"It is intolerable that the RUC who threatened Rosemary Nelson's life should then have had the ability to deny her adequate security," Francie Molloy, a Sinn Fein Assemblyman, said. "Those who quite deliberately left Rosemary Nelson exposed and vulnerable to attack despite the very obvious threat to her life are as much responsible for her death as those who carried out the actual assassination."

The RUC and the Northern Ireland Office insisted Mrs Nelson had never applied for

protection. Last year others had done so on her behalf but she was not judged to be sufficiently at risk.

Sources described the allegations of collusion as "absolute nonsense" and doubted that Mrs Nelson would have accepted protection.

A senior Metropolitan Police officer recently investigated Mrs Nelson's claims that the RUC had harassed and threatened her but his report has not yet been published.

Sir Ronnie cast doubt on whether the Red Hand Defenders carried out the murder by themselves when he confirmed that the bomb was more sophisticated than anything they had used previously.

The speculation was that they may have been helped by disgruntled members of other loyalist paramilitary groups.

The murder has cast a pall over today's St Patrick's Day celebrations in Washington and complicated President Clinton's task as he tries to help to resolve the decommissioning deadlock in private meetings with David Trimble and Gerry Adams.

Speaking in New York, George Mitchell, the former US senator who chaired the Stormont peace talks, intensi-

fied the pressure on the men

when he declared: "History will not forgive them if an agreement is not reached." is

"We must be understanding, we must be patient, we must be tolerant, but we must also be insistent as we say to

those leaders: 'You have done much but you must do more.'"

In Washington Mo Mowlam, the Northern Ireland Secretary, said that the bombers would not destroy the Good Friday accord.

Paddy McGee, second left, helping to carry his daughter's coffin into her house in Lurgan yesterday. Hundreds called to pay their respects to the family

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THE TIMES WEDNESDAY MARCH 17 1999

Number's up for calculator in maths drive

MATHEMATICS should no longer be the preserve of swots. Tony Blair said yesterday as he launched a teaching strategy requiring more use of the brain and less of calculators in primary schools.

The Prime Minister told an audience of teachers and business leaders in London: "For too long maths has been seen by too many people as unfashionable, a subject for swots. We must forge a new status for maths within society as a whole. This means destroying the myth that it's clever to be hopeless at maths."

Carol Vorderman, the television presenter who is supporting the Government's Maths Year 2000 campaign, said: "People who like maths are seen as freaks. Well if so then I'm head girl of the freak school."

The mathematics drive, which involves a daily numeracy hour at all primary schools as part of the £55 million National Numeracy Strategy, follows this year's National Year of Reading and the Government's daily literacy hour.

Yesterday's launch saw the publication of detailed advice for teachers. They were issued with a weighty framework document laying out the teaching of mathematics from reception class to the final year of primary school. The document gives sample questions that indicate the level of attainment required for each age group. Use of calculators is discouraged.

The Government's aim is for 75 per cent of all 11 year

New initiative will encourage primary school children to learn basics, reports Hannah Bettis.

olds to be reaching the mathematics standards expected for their age by 2002. Four out of ten 11 year olds failed to reach the target last year.

The Government will involve adults to achieve a sea change in the way society feels about mathematics. Three thousand parents will join their children on 500 family numeracy courses and will be encouraged to brush up their times tables.

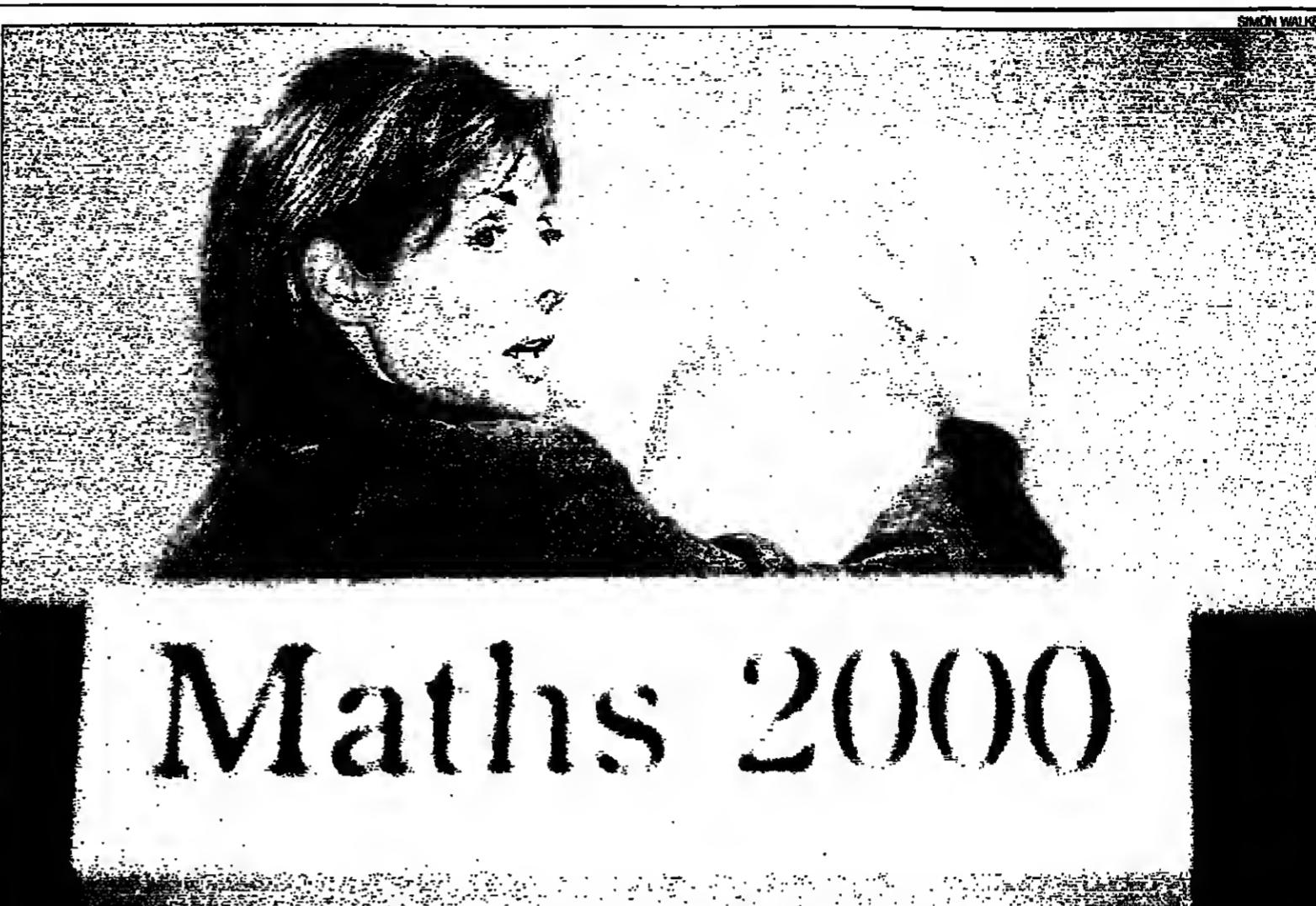
David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education, was the first adult volunteer, arriving fresh from a mathematics test on Radio 4's *Today* programme. He took 14 seconds to answer twelve times nine correctly, but at least managed to avoid the gaffe of his former deputy, Stephen Byers, who suggested that eight times seven was 54 at a mathematics promotion last year.

Teachers' unions reacted cautiously to the numeracy drive. Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the National Association of School Masters and Union of Women Teachers, said: "Many teachers will

appreciate the rich irony in the Government's employing Carol Vorderman to launch Maths Year 2000. She earns more for one day's TV work than many teachers earn in a whole year and unlike Carol, teachers can't have their mistakes edited out."

David Hart, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, said that while the National Numeracy Strategy would not be as controversial as the Literacy Strategy, some concerns would remain. "It is tied too closely to the Government's artificial national targets, and its introduction, along with the Literacy Strategy, threatens to marginalise the rest of the National Curriculum."

The NAHT has no objection to Maths Year 2000 but quite frankly every year is a maths year in all schools."



Maths 2000

Doing it by fingers: Carol Vorderman helping to launch Maths 2000 yesterday. She said she was head girl of the freak school of those who liked maths

Actress wins by recounting her lines

BY SUSIE STEINER

A SOAP star trounced politicians and a professor yesterday in three multiplication teasers set by *The Times*. Barbara Windsor, of *EastEnders* and the *Carry On* films, gave the fastest answers and said: "Well, you don't want to look like a berk, do you?"

We asked three questions that have teased government ministers: seven times eight (56), which famously tripped up Stephen Byers when he was Schools Minister; nine times eight (72), asked of David Blunkett, the Education Secretary, a year ago; and 12 times nine, (108), which took Mr Blunkett 14 seconds on the *Today* programme yesterday.

Heinz Wolff, celebrity inventor and Emeritus Professor of Biomechanics at Brunel University, answered the first two questions in two seconds each, and the third in three seconds. He said: "I like playing with numbers. If I'm at a wedding and on the board is hymn number 192, then I think, That's twice 96!" Ms Windsor answered the three questions

accurately in under two seconds each.

"It's my era," she explained.

"I'm 61 and we had to learn our tables by heart. I don't have any problem with maths. I've got a ridiculous memory and I did enjoy maths. My mother would be really really proud."

David Willetts, the Shadow Education Secretary who is known as "Two Brain Willetts" among some parliamentarians, answered the first question in four seconds, the second in three seconds and the third in four seconds.

He said: "We used to recite them by rote. My worry about what the Government is doing is simply that their strategy is indiscriminate and compulsory."

Peter Stringfellow, 58, the nightshift owner, took 20 seconds on the first question, eight seconds on the next and 15 seconds on the last with a couple of incorrect attempts.

He said: "I never learnt my times tables because I was ill for that period at school."

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Six-year-olds

- What is one more than 67? Than 97? Than 197? Than 247?
What is one less than 87? Than 207? Than 257?
(Answers)
- Fill in the missing numbers on this number track:
2 3 4 8 9 10 12 13 15
- How many different ways can you score 4 by rolling two dice?
What about 5?

Nine-year-olds

- What are the next three numbers in each sequence?
a. 28, 47, 66, 85...
b. 48, 41, 34, 27...
c. 125, 157, 189, 221...
d. 268, 265, 264...
e. 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24...
f. 9, 15, 21, 27, 33, 39...
g. 1, 4, 9, 16, 25, 36, 49, 64, 81, 100, 121, 144, 169, 196, 225, 256, 289, 324, 361, 400, 441, 484, 529, 576, 625, 676, 729, 784, 841, 896, 961, 1024, 1089, 1156, 1225, 1296, 1369, 1444, 1521, 1600, 1681, 1764, 1849, 1936, 2025, 2116, 2209, 2304, 2401, 2500, 2609, 2716, 2824, 2936, 3049, 3164, 3281, 3400, 3521, 3644, 3769, 3896, 4024, 4156, 4289, 4424, 4561, 4700, 4841, 4984, 5129, 5276, 5424, 5576, 5729, 5884, 6041, 6200, 6361, 6524, 6689, 6856, 7024, 7201, 7380, 7561, 7744, 7929, 8116, 8304, 8494, 8686, 8880, 9076, 9274, 9474, 9676, 9879, 10084, 10291, 10500, 10711, 10924, 11139, 11356, 11575, 11796, 11919, 12144, 12361, 12580, 12801, 13024, 13249, 13476, 13705, 13936, 14169, 14404, 14641, 14879, 15119, 15352, 15587, 15823, 16051, 16279, 16509, 16731, 16954, 17178, 17403, 17629, 17856, 18084, 18313, 18543, 18774, 19006, 19239, 19473, 19708, 19944, 20181, 20419, 20659, 20891, 21124, 21358, 21593, 21829, 22066, 22304, 22543, 22783, 23024, 23266, 23509, 23754, 24000, 24246, 24494, 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IOC members 'out to get' Samaranch

THE Olympics chief, Juan Antonio Samaranch, has admitted to close associates that there is a campaign among leading members of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to force his resignation over the cash-for-votes corruption scandal.

On the eve of what promises to be the most turbulent day in the Olympic movement since Ben Johnson was found positive for drugs at the 1988 Olympics, 91 IOC members were gathering for a meeting in Lausanne.

A vote is due today on whether Señor Samaranch should remain as president and whether to expel the six members who received favours from Salt Lake City in its successful bid to stage the 2002 Winter Games.

Four members of the committee have already resigned.

Sources said yesterday that Señor Samaranch, who has held his post since 1980 but has refused responsibility for the biggest crisis in the organisation's 106-year history, is considering several options. One is that he should stay on until his planned retirement in 2001. Another is to retire after the Sydney Olympics in September 2000. A third is to give up when the IOC meets in Seoul, South Korea, in June. The fourth, which is consid-

Olympic leaders are braced for turmoil, writes John Goodbody in Lausanne

ered the least likely, is to resign immediately.

Several leading members are aware that large segments of the international community and some sponsors believe that Señor Samaranch should take personal responsibility and resign. Such an action, they believe, would show the world that a new era in the Olympics is beginning.

However, several of his

possible successors fear that if they try to persuade Señor Samaranch to resign within the next few months, they risk losing the support of other members.

Kevin Gosper, an Australian member of the executive, said yesterday that no decision had yet been taken on how the vote on Señor Samaranch's future would be taken. If may be by secret ballot or by show of hands. Señor Samaranch's supporters would prefer that because members would be more reluctant publicly to op-

pose him. Each of the six members facing expulsion will today be allowed 20 minutes to defend himself before his fellow members.

A two-thirds majority is required for expulsion. The six are: Señor Paul Wallwork of Samoa; Lamine Keita of Mali; Agustín Arroyo of Ecuador; Zain el-Abdin Ahmed Abdel Gadir of Sudan; Sergio Santander Fanthri of Chile; and Jean-Claude Ganga of Congo.

Mr Ganga yesterday launched a bitter criticism of the move to expel him, accusing the six-man investigating panel and the executive board of seeking revenge for the occasion in 1976 when he led the black African boycott of the Montreal Olympics.

Mr Ganga said that there was an attempt to "stop Africa having an influence" in the IOC. They are trying to stop us being at the centre of decision-making in world sport."

□ Sydney: Phil Coles. An Australian member of the IOC, denied accusations of freeloading and gift-taking that threaten his career. Amid growing moves to drop him from the Sydney committee preparing for the 2000 Games, he said allegations that he took £24,600 in travel and accommodation from Salt Lake City were a myth. (APF)



Troops of the 1st Battalion King's Own Royal Border Regiment patrolling Skopje airbase yesterday as part of the Nato force in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia poised to rescue peace monitors in Kosovo if necessary

SERBIAN officials told mediators at the Kosovo peace talks yesterday that Belgrade would rather fight Nato than sign up to an autonomy deal for the province which they said had been finalised behind their backs (Tom Walk-

er writes). But sources close to the mediators said the posturing belied a nervousness among the Serbs, whom one diplomat said had been "bad-

ly rattled" by the sudden Albanian agreement to the Contact Group's three-year transition blueprint. Wolfgang Petritsch, the EU mediator, told

the Serbs that Nato bombing was "days, not weeks, away". □ Sarajevo: Joni Lantza, the Croat Deputy Interior Minister of Bosnia's Muslim-Croat federation, was critically ill yesterday after a car bomb attack here. (Reuters)

Jordan to purchase British tanks

By MICHAEL EVANS
DEFENCE EDITOR

THE Royal Jordanian Army is to buy a "substantial" number of British Challenger tanks, it was announced yesterday.

Britain's main battle tanks, which were deployed in the Gulf War, are now being replaced by a more advanced Challenger 2, which first came into service in June last year. Although the British and Jordanian governments are still discussing the matter, the sale could involve hundreds of tanks.

The British Army has about 400 Challenger 1s, all of which will be surplus once the full order for Challenger 2s has been completed.

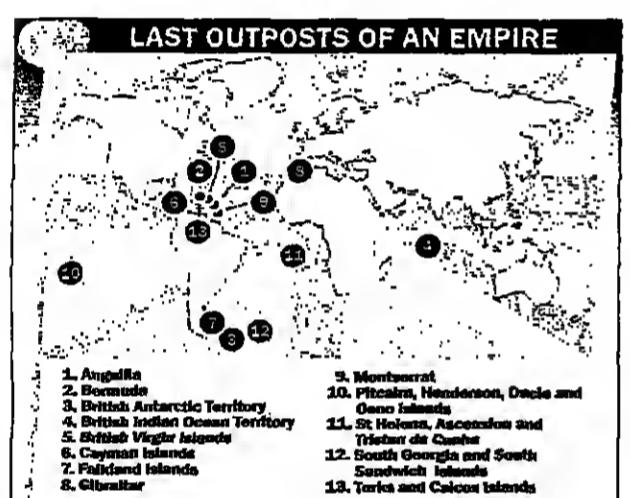
Paul Beaver of Jane's Defence Weekly said the Challenger 2 would replace the Jordanian Tariq tank, which is based on the Centurion, and would supplement the Khalid tank, which he said has "high levels of commonality with the Challenger". Mr Beaver said he understood that concerns over classified systems, including the Chobham armour fitted to Challengers, had been resolved.

Lord Gilbert, the Defence Procurement Minister, said during a visit to Amman yesterday that the exact number of tanks to be sold and the delivery dates had yet to be agreed.

The deal is the first arms agreement between Britain and Jordan since King Hussein died, although the Challengers are relatively old, they will significantly strengthen Jordan's defence forces.

□ Taba: King Abdullah of Jordan, making his first official visit to an Arab country since coming to the throne, held talks in Taba with President Mubarak of Egypt.

The two leaders attended the inauguration of a link between their countries' electricity supply systems through a submarine cable between Taba and Jordan's southern city of Aqaba — the first step on the way to a broader Arab electricity grid. "This is the first practical step to link economic ties after King Hussein's death," an Egyptian official said. (Reuters)



Cook opens door to 150,000 new citizens

By MICHAEL BINYON
DIPLOMATIC EDITOR

AFTER a long delay, Robin Cook is to tell Parliament today that Britain is to restore full British citizenship to all 150,000 inhabitants of its 13 dependent territories as soon as possible. A Bill will be introduced in the next Parliament and those involved are expected to be given full British passports within a year.

Labour sees the Foreign Secretary's move as an overdue rectification of the hardship caused by the Conservative Government's 1981 Immigration Act,

which deprived all those living in Britain's remaining colonies of an automatic right to British citizenship. The result was to bar them from working or settling in Britain, to restrict their travel and confine them to tiny islands plagued by high unemployment.

About 150,000 people in all will be eligible for new passports: inhabitants of Gibraltar and the Falkland Islands are already full citizens. The change will allow everyone living in the dependencies scattered between Bermuda and the Pitcairn Islands to travel to the European Union without visas. It will also give them full Westminster voting

rights if they move to Britain, though not in their own islands.

The Bill was supposed to be ready six months ago; however, it ran into the bureaucracy of the Home Office, which insisted on making a thorough investigation. Home Office officials were afraid of setting unwelcome immigration precedents.

The Government does not expect any mass immigration to Britain, especially as living standards in Bermuda, the Cayman Islands and the British Virgin Islands are higher than in Britain. These territories account for almost half the population of those eligible for

new passports. Labour made clear at a summit of all the former colonies last year that it regarded the present situation as unjust. The 1981 Act was passed to stop the six million inhabitants of Hong Kong moving to Britain before the handover to China. It hurt the remote and poorer territories, especially St Helena, one of the most isolated, which has high unemployment and depends on a yearly £3.2 million subsidy from Britain.

For three territories, citizenship is irrelevant: British Antarctic Territory, South Georgia and British Indian Ocean Territory are uninhabited.

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UN order on Jerusalem 'is null and void'

By CHRISTOPHER WALKER
IN JERUSALEM

DIFFERENCES between Israel and Europe over the status of Jerusalem widened yesterday when Israel announced as "null and void" an historic 1947 United Nations resolution that called for the internationalisation of the Holy City.

In remarks in Jerusalem to foreign ambassadors, Ariel Sharon, Israel's hawkish Foreign Minister, said: "Resolution 181, which speaks about Jerusalem not being part of Israel, is null and void. We have a very wide national consensus about this issue."

The city's legal status re-emerged as a divisive issue last week when Israel demanded, but failed to secure, a pledge from European Union diplomats that they would not meet Palestinian diplomats in the eastern sector of the city, captured by Israel in 1967 but claimed by the Palestinians as the capital of their future state.

Along with the future of Israeli troops in Lebanon, the future of Jerusalem has suddenly emerged as a key issue in Israeli election on May 17, with the right-wing Govern-



Sharon rules out new struggle for Jerusalem

ment led by Binyamin Netanyahu claiming that it has the best credentials to withstand international pressure on the sovereignty issue.

In the last poll, in 1996, Mr Netanyahu and his Likud party made much of claims that Shimon Peres, then Labour Party leader, would have permitted the city again to be divided into Arab and Jewish halves. Ehud Barak, his successor and former chief of staff, has shown determina-

tion not to display any such talk for compromise on the Jerusalem question, which is regarded as the most difficult facing the stalled peace process.

Yesterday Mr Sharon recalled for the envoys his military past as a platoon commander in the Middle East war at Israel's founding in 1948 and told them: "It is very hard to imagine that after all those years, we again have to struggle for Jerusalem."

The future status of the city is supposed to be a central issue in the talks on a final-status peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians that have been stalled for some time. The UN considers east Jerusalem an occupied territory, and stands by Resolution 181 which was part of the partition of British Mandate Palestine.

The European Union in the letter which sparked the latest controversy said that Jerusalem was a separate entity. The Israeli Government hit back by releasing a hardline statement vowing never to agree to the division or internationalisation of the city which it claims to have been its capital for 3,000 years.

The main obstacle to permitting access to more pilgrims is the problem of persuading the three main Christian denominations that control the church, the Greek Orthodox, the Roman Catholic and the Armenian Orthodox to agree to changes to improve safety.

Mr Shai noted a suggestion by government officials to create an extra exit from the church, which has only one at present. The heads of the three denominations have agreed to the idea in theory, but there has been no agreement where it should be.

"To change even a small stone in the church is almost impossible," Mr Shai said.

In addition to the "Big Three" which control the site in Jerusalem's Old City, conquered by Israel in 1967, three other Christian communities — the Coptic, Ethiopian and Syrian — also have limited rights there, which has added to the complications.

Similar problems of overcrowding beset the Church of the Nativity, which will be the focal point for millennium celebrations under the aegis of the Palestinian Authority led by Yasser Arafat, himself a Muslim.

Hani Abu-Dayyeh, vice-president of the Near East Tourist Agency, said that the church, believed to be built over the birthplace of Jesus, could handle only about a million visitors a year.

Many pilgrims wished to worship, not just pay a quick visit. "You have to make sure the worshippers can pray. You cannot just push them in and out," he said.

Many Palestinian speakers at the conference complained of an Israeli roadblock that delays passage between Jerusalem and Bethlehem by up to two hours for each tourist coach. Moshe Katsav, the Israeli Tourism Minister, said that the checkpoint was necessary to ensure security.



Army told to let Beduin remain

Members of the al-Azazme tribe have trekked across the border with camels, donkeys and provisions. Conflicting

reports have said that the exodus was because of the severe drought in the region or to escape a blood feud. Troops who were ready to remove the tribe were stopped by the Supreme Court ruling, a Negev regional council spokeswoman said. (AP)

US 'aid for witchcraft' angers Helms

FROM BEN MACINTYRE IN WASHINGTON

THE American Government has acknowledged that participants in a US-funded health training programme in Haiti may have taken part in voodoo ceremonies, after allegations that the US is funding "witchcraft" in the Caribbean island.

Senator Jesse Helms, chairman of the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has written in Madeleine Albright, the US Secretary of State, expressing concern that money sent to Haiti from the US Agency for International Development (USAID) may be being used for voodoo ceremonies, the religion imported by West African slaves and then melded with

aspects of Roman Catholicism. Mr Helms said he feared that US aid money was "funding programmes that endorse what amounts to witchcraft" and he demanded that no money should find its way to groups that "produce material intended to be used in a voodoo ceremony".

He said: "If there were prizes for the most outrageous foreign aid programme, this would be in line for first place." Ecstatic trances, superstition and magic rituals play an important part in voodoo, long associated with the occult in Western eyes.

James Rubin, the State Department spokesman, denied that US funds were be-

ing used to promote voodoo, but agreed that students in a healthcare programme funded by the US may have taken part in voodoo ceremonies. "While some traditional practitioners may have participated in voodoo ceremonies, USAID funding has not been used to support those practitioners," he said.

Mr Helms said the issue emerged after USAID funded a programme by the local Planned Parenthood group "that utilised traditional Haitian health practitioners for distributing information on family planning" and sought to use voodoo ceremonies as an "important social network".

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Congo rebels kill Mugabe troops

FROM ROBIN LODGE
IN NAIROBI

UP TO 150 Zimbabwean soldiers are reported to have been killed in battles with rebel forces in the southeast of the Democratic Republic of Congo, while thousands of refugees have been streaming across the border with Zambia to escape the fighting.

A military expert on the region, citing rebel sources, said yesterday that at least 80 Zimbabweans had been killed in the clashes — identified by documents found on the bodies — but that there could be more bodies hidden in the bush.

A rebel commander said that 150 had been killed, including a battalion commander, while four armoured vehicles and several military lorries had been captured. He said four Zimbabweans had been taken prisoner.

The fighting comes after a Zimbabwean-led attack on rebel forces last week aimed at halting a rebel advance on the diamond town of Mbujimayi.



near the towns of Pepa, Pweto and Kabinda in Shaba province. Last week, a rebel spokesman said their forces had killed 300 troops loyal to President Kabila.

The Times of Zambia reported on Monday that at least 10,000 civilians, including a number of French settlers, had crossed the border. Yesterday a spokesman for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees said people were passing through one crossing point at Kalanda at a rate of 900 an hour. Those fleeing were also said to include 800 Congo Government soldiers.

■ Harare: A Zimbabwe defence headquarters spokesman, Colonel Chancellor Dye, dismissed last night as propaganda claims of the first serious reverse since President Mugabe sent 8,000 troops to the Democratic Republic of Congo last August (Michael Harmack writes). "That is a lie," the colonel responded when asked about reports from both Nairobi and Kigali of a pitched battle on Monday.

with no independent observers to witness the fighting, which the rebels said took place over the past few days

The reports, which have not had independent confirmation, also said the losses had included a battalion commander. The latest claims have also proved impossible to verify.



President Clinton and his wife host a millennium event yesterday at the White House dedicated to "Women as Citizens". In a New York poll, 10 per cent of voters wanted to know "why Hillary still stays with the President".

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Mayor dashes Hillary's Senate hopes

HILLARY CLINTON may be having second thoughts about trying for elected office after the latest opinion poll indicated that she would be easily defeated by Rudolph Giuliani, the New York Mayor, in a possible race for the US Senate.

The survey, by Zogby International pollsters, put Mr Giuliani "comfortably" ahead of Mrs Clinton with 48.4 per cent to 36.9 per cent of the vote, indicating that winning the New York Senate seat would be an uphill struggle that could easily end in humiliation for the President's wife.

"There was a kind of honeymoon after she announced she was thinking of running, but now it is clear what a major battle she would face if she runs against Giuliani. The honeymoon is clearly over," John Zogby said.

Democratic voters in New York still favour Mrs Clinton as a Senate candidate, but New Yorkers in general hold a more favourable view of their Republican Mayor. The poll indicated that voters were particularly uncertain what Mrs Clinton would want to run for the seat and what she intends to do for New York State should she win it. The scandals of recent months and the state of the Clintons' marriage have also had an effect on her possible candidature because nearly 10 per cent of voters "wanted to know why she still stays with the President".

Neither Mrs Clinton nor Mr Giuliani have formally announced they will run for the Senate seat to be vacated by Daniel Patrick Moynihan, but in the aftermath of her husband's impeachment trial Mrs Clinton made clear that she was considering a bid, prompting a frenzy of excitement in Democratic circles and some sharply critical remarks from Mr Giuliani.

Mrs Clinton's backers insisted that she would be impossible to beat if she decided to run in the race and an initial poll by Time/CNN indicated that she was supported by 52 per cent to Mr Giuliani's 43 per cent. But as sympathy for her ordeal as a wronged wife has faded, so has her popularity.

The Senate job is only one of several options being considered by Mrs Clinton after her husband leaves office, ranging from founding a public policy unit to serving in the Cabinet of a possible future Democratic Administration. Mrs Clinton is also weighing whether to head a charity foundation or take up an academic post.

"Most of the universities in the country would give anything to have her come and

teach," Donna Shalala, the Health and Human Services Secretary and a friend of Mrs Clinton, said.

Financial considerations may play a part in her final decision because the Clintons have little in the way of savings, no home of their own and vast legal bills, although a defence fund is working to raise cash to pay the bills. As a writer and lecturer she could earn millions of dollars in the aftermath of the Clinton presidency, but as a senator Mrs Clinton would be barred from sitting on corporate boards or delivering paid speeches.

Mr Clinton has observed that his wife would make a "terrific" senator, but with one eye, perhaps, on the family's bank statement, he has also remarked that she could earn \$20 million (£12 million) after he leaves office.

As a senator Mrs Clinton would earn \$136,000 a year, but it has been estimated that she would earn about \$50,000 a lecture, and at least \$5 million alone from a tell-all book about her time in the White House.

"The more she reveals, the more valuable the project would be," Judith Regan, a New York literary agent, said.

■ Hat in the ring: Steve Forbes, the publisher, promising a "new information age campaign", yesterday became the first person to announce his presidential candidature on the Internet. (Reuters)



Giuliani: "comfortably" ahead of Mrs Clinton

Clinton offers new debt plan for Africa

Washington: President Clinton called on countries yesterday to pursue a broad approach to debt relief and write off \$70 billion (£43 billion) mostly in Africa.

Calling for a partnership with Africa, Mr Clinton announced the initiative in a speech to the opening session of a US-Africa ministerial meeting at the State Department. His proposal extended

the US commitment to providing more relief to a broader range of heavily indebted poor countries more quickly and with strong reform programmes.

"What I am proposing is debt reduction that is deeper and faster," he told ministers from 46 African countries.

He proposed "complete forgiveness" of bilateral concessional loans. (Reuters)

At least
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its lorry





Firefighters survey the wreck after a train bound for New Orleans hit a lorry on a level crossing

At least 13 die as US train hits lorry

FROM DAMIAN WHITWORTH IN WASHINGTON

AT least 13 people were killed, with others missing, and more than 100 were injured yesterday after a passenger train ploughed into a lorry at a level crossing at Bourbonnais, south of Chicago.

Rescuers spent yesterday sifting through the wreckage of the Amtrak train looking for survivors. There had been 217 people on board, including the crew, when the overnight train

from Chicago to New Orleans hit the lorry on a crossing on Monday night.

The driver of the lorry, which was carrying steel from a local plant, was believed to have survived. Most of the train was derailed and fires broke out in several carriages. Some of those taken to hospital were in a critical condition.

As rescuers searched the train the word "empty" was

sprayed on carriages when it was clear that there were no survivors inside. But more than ten people were unaccounted for and firemen expressed little hope of finding anyone else alive. Their search was concentrated on a twisted sleeper carriage which was expected to contain more bodies.

Lee Bullock, president of Amtrak/Inter City, told reporters that the cause of the accident was not known. The crossing was protected by gates. The investigation is expected to centre on whether the gates and lights, which were flashing after the accident, were

working before the collision. The train consisted of two engines and 14 carriages. Both engines and all but the last three carriages left the tracks. One of the engines split in two.

The gravest accident in Amtrak history happened in 1993 when 47 people were killed near Mobile, Alabama, when a tug hit a bridge and caused it to collapse as a train was passing over it. In another serious accident, 11 people were killed and 26 injured in February 1996 when an Amtrak train smashed head-on into a commuter train in Silver Spring, just outside Washington.



The scene of devastation after the rail crash at Bourbonnais, Illinois, south of Chicago, yesterday. Two engines and 11 carriages left the tracks

<http://parksweb.com/trainframes.htm> — Details of the train involved in the crash
<http://www.nhtsa.gov/> — The US National Safety Board
<http://www.amtrak.com/> — The website for Amtrak

Riyadh: An Iraqi plane carrying 110 Muslim pilgrims ignored a UN embargo and the Western-imposed no-fly zone and landed in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The Iraqi Airways head said Iraq was planning three flights to the haj pilgrimage this year. (Reuters)

Anwar's plea

Kuala Lumpur: Anwar Ibrahim, Malaysia's sacked Finance Minister, asked the judge in his corruption trial to step down, saying he has not had a fair hearing. (Reuters)

Cuban jailings

Havana: Cuba risked international human rights wrath by jailing four dissidents — one for five years — for stirring up unrest against the Government of Fidel Castro. (AP)

Soft landing

Moscow: Ludmila Mulin drove off a garage's ninth floor as her ex-husband, Gleb, taught her to drive. Both were hurt as the car went through a glass wall to land in trees. (AP)

Ex-mayor held

New York: Former Mayor David Dinkins and two congressmen were among 14 people arrested as they protested at last month's fatal police shooting of an unarmed immigrant. (AP)

Diplomat hurt

Budapest: Mick Leake, a second secretary at the British Embassy here, is in hospital after being seriously injured in a car accident 60 miles from the Hungarian capital. (AP)

Top table dish

Tehran: Iran may end its four-year ban on satellite dishes, but only for "elites" such as artists, professors, journalists and public officials. (AFP)

Paula Jones and husband announce separation

FROM DAMIAN WHITWORTH
IN WASHINGTON

IN PUBLIC they have put on a show of commitment to each other, but in private their marriage was plagued by rows and proved unable to survive the accusation that the President of the United States was guilty of sexual harassment. Paula Jones — the woman whose legal action against Bill Clinton triggered the Monica Lewinsky scandal — has separated from her husband.

Jones moved back to live near her mother

Mrs Jones has said that she and her husband, Steve, had no immediate plans to divorce but she is moving back to live near her mother in Arkansas while he remains at their condominium in Long Beach, California. She said that they were "not going to get ugly with each other" and were no different from many other couples who live apart because of different career ambitions and interests.

"I wanted to get back closer to my family and friends," Mrs Jones told

USA Today. "In California, I had to be very careful about who I got to know, so I didn't develop any close friendships."

The newspaper said the couple had been discussing a separation for some time after disagreements over the strategy in the sexual harassment case and how to spend the money from the out-of-court settlement with Mr Clinton.

Mrs Jones claimed that in 1991, when she was engaged to Steve and Mr Clinton was Governor of Arkansas

she visited him in a hotel room where he asked her to perform oral sex. The affair with Ms Lewinsky emerged when the former White House trainee was asked to submit an affidavit in Mrs Jones's harassment case.

James Carville, Mr Clinton's former adviser, suggested that Mrs Jones was "trailer park" trash, but in November Mr Clinton eventually settled with an \$850,000 (£524,690) payment that was not accompanied by an apology or admittance of wrong-

doing. After paying her lawyers, Mrs Jones was left with \$201,000. She plans to take a job as a manicurist and is considering offers from the media.

Mr Jones has been unemployed since being dismissed last year as a Northwest Airlines clerk. He is contesting that dismissal and plans to write a book and pursue an acting career. Their sons, six and two, will live with Mrs Jones, who has bought a ranch house in Cabot, Arkansas, near her mother's home.

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The thrill of knowing

Where is Mombasa? In European Brain Week John McCrone explains how the brain surprises us into knowing the answer

When we get a joke or a riddle, there is a definite feeling that comes with the moment. A friend might try out a brain-teaser on us, saying that this person went up to bed, turned off the light and slid under the covers. The problem was that the light switch was right across the room, yet he still managed to make it into bed before the room went dark. So how did he do it?

The answer, if you have not guessed, is that it was daylight when he went to bed. But the point is that when we have pondered something for a second and then get the solution, we feel a sudden

We feel an emotional jolt, an 'aha!' of surprise or pleasure

clap of insight. We do not just see the silly logic of the solution, saying to ourselves in dry computer fashion, "well, yes, that adds up". We feel an emotional jolt, an "aha!" of surprise. And a similar sharp stab of emotion occurs in many situations, such as when we find a set of door keys we have been looking for, when we suddenly remember yesterday was our mother's birthday, or when a dog dashes out into the road in front of our car. There is a shock that seems to grab our attention and tell us something significant has happened.

Aha! feelings come in many different flavours and vary in strength. Some lead to a feeling of elation and delight, as when we hear a funny joke or discover we have won a lottery prize; others lead to a sinking feeling or even distress, as when we note heavy footsteps coming up behind us on a dark night, or spot a hairy spider on our shirt sleeve.

The scale of an aha! can also range from the mildest buzz of interest or familiarity right up to heart-pumping alarm. This variety is confusing, but a big clue about the origins of all such feelings is that they ap-

pear tied to the escalation of an event into consciousness. Virtually by definition, the feeling of significance, certainly, recognition, surprise, or alarm are connected to whatever it is that has just caught our attention rather than some background event of which we will not take any further notice.

The feeling seems bound in with an assessment process that leads us eventually to focus on one sensation or thought out of the many that may be swirling on the edges of our minds.

To see how vital a part the *aha!* feeling plays in our mental lives, just try to imagine consciousness without this constant feeling of judgment. It tells us what is important. It even tells us what is familiar and what is novel, or right or wrong. If asked whether Mombasa was in Africa or South Africa, we might find either answer equally plausible unless we had a positive flicker of recognition to point in the right direction.

And the way we know that we don't know an answer is when there is no click of familiarity for either alternative — such as, perhaps, if we were asked whether Mombasa was in Uganda or Kenya, or whether its population was half a million or three million. There is a whole cascade of motor and metabolic adjustments that take place whenever we are struck by a surprising or novel event.

The first thing that happens is almost too obvious to mention: we immediately stop whatever it is that we are doing and glance to bring the event into focus. Yet it is worth noting the implications. The decision to halt and inspect must be made before the mind itself has entered full consciousness.

The perhaps tricky disengagement from whatever it was that we had been about to do, and the reorientation of



Rapid change: there is a whole cascade of motor and metabolic adjustments whenever we are struck by a surprising event

our senses to a new location, must be organised at a reflexive, pre-conscious, level.

This orientation response is a complete, whole body reaction. When we hear a knock at the door or feel an unexpected

touch on our shoulder, not only do we automatically stop and turn, we also begin to sweat a little, our mouths go dry, our heart rate and blood pressure increase, extra sugar is released into our circulation, our blood vessels dilate to raise the supply to the muscles and brain, our breathing deepens, and our air passages widen to bring in more oxygen. Our brains go through a process of arousal as well. There is a rapid change in neurotransmitter levels to make us more alert. The orientation response makes sure that we hit the ground running, both physically and mentally.

The link between orientation response and the *aha!* feeling is easy enough to see. As part of orientating to a significant event, or even a significant idea or thought, we experience a rich variety of physical changes.

Our heart may lurch, our stomach heave, our face blanch. There is nothing either about such reactions; they

can be measured with voltmeters or blood-pressure gauges. And we will experience them just as directly. So the feeling of knowing that we know — of familiarity and recognition — is a muted version of this orientation reaction.

When we ask ourselves if Mombasa is in Kenya, the reason we trust the answer is because of a confirming twinge. It is the only pairing that triggers a slight halting — a catch in our attention — and a just-measurable quickening of the pulse. A pairing with Uganda should draw a metabolic blank — the empty feeling we call unfamiliarity.

Extracted from *Going Inside* by John McCrone published by Faber (RRP £20). Times readers can order this title only for £17 by calling the Times Bookshop on 0990 329 454.

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SCIENTISTS FOR THE NEW CENTURY

On Wednesday March 31, from Captain Hook to RoboCop, Dr Peter Kyberd, from Oxford Orthopaedic Engineering Centre, will discuss how close scientists have come to creating the perfect artificial hand. Are man-machine hybrids like RoboCop real to reality, or are they destined to remain in the realms of fiction?

The talk will be introduced by Professor Susan Greenfield, the director of The Royal Institution. There will be the opportunity for questions from the audience.

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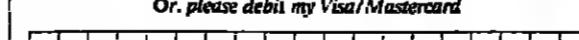
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Clash over Big Bang

PARTICLE PHYSICISTS spend a lot of taxpayers' money, so they need to prove that the public is getting value for it. But a claim is issued recently by Fermilab, the US particle physics laboratory at Batavia, Illinois, has provoked cries of "foul" from Europe's equivalent the CERN laboratory in Geneva. While the physicists are usually prepared to make common cause in the interests of extracting taxpayers' cash, there are rules to be observed. Among these is not claiming as theirs — at least not too obviously — what someone else has already discovered.

The row centres on an arcane but vital aspect of how nature behaves: At the Big Bang, equal amounts of matter and antimatter were created, but the Universe as we live in it today consists exclusively of matter. Andrei Sakharov suggested that a subtle difference between particles and antiparticles led, soon after the Big Bang, to a slight excess of particles from which the whole visible Universe has since evolved.

This difference is measurable as a property called charge-parity violation — which amounts to saying that particles and antiparticles do not behave as each other's exact opposites. Providing conclusive evidence of CP violation is therefore important.

Indirect evidence of CP violation in particles called K-mesons (or kaons) was discovered in 1964 by James Cronin and Val Fitch at Brookhaven National Laboratory, Long Island. They won a Nobel prize for their work. Ever

since, physicists have been looking for direct evidence as this would help them to distinguish between rival theories of matter.

Earlier this month Fermilab issued a press release announcing that this long-sought evidence was finally at hand.

There was "an audible gasp", it was said, when the result was announced by Peter Shawhan of the University of Chicago to a seminar on February 24.

What provoked the gasp was Shawhan giving a measure of the degree of CP-violation by saying: "Our result is that epsilon prime over epsilon equals 28, plus or minus 4.1, times ten to the minus four."

Professor Fitch, now at Princeton, says: "It is a most astonishing result. It is quite unexpected and very interesting."

It was at this moment that physicists at CERN felt that the unwritten rules had been breached. For an experiment there, first reported 11 years ago, had produced a similar value, 23, plus or minus 6.5, times ten to the minus four. CERN issued a statement offering congratulations for the Fermilab data "which confirm with greater precision the earlier result by the NA3 experiment at CERN".

As Konrad Kleinknecht of the University of Mainz told PhysicsWeb, it was a brilliant confirmation of the earlier observations at CERN, and deserves credit for that. The irony is that Fermilab has long claimed a much smaller value and was now claiming originality by proving themselves wrong and somebody else right. Naughty, naughty.

An insect turn-off

El Niño's good turn

GRASSHOPPERS like lettuce but cannot abide spinach. Like all insects, grasshoppers require a supply of sterols in their diets, which they convert into cholesterol, an essential part of cell membranes. But not all sterols are equal, and the ones in spinach are useless to the grasshopper.

But how does it know? Spencer Behrman and colleagues from the University of Arizona found out by experiment. They fed grasshoppers on spinach and found that it was nothing to do with taste. Naive grasshoppers tucked in enthusiastically, but when offered a second meal of it, they turned their noses up.

The team found, however, that the grasshoppers were injected with lettuce sterols immediately after the first meal, they went on eating the spinach. But if they were injected with extra spinach sterols, their aversion to the vegetable increased. So it seems, they conclude in the *Journal of Experimental Biology*, that feedback from the stomach soon after a meal is what turns a grasshopper off spinach. Much like a lager lout and a bad curry.

EL NIÑO, the climatic variation that begins with a warm current off the coast of Peru and turns into a blizzard of headlines about flood, drought and pestilence, has at last done a good turn. A threatened population of fish eagles at Lake Naivasha in Kenya has El Niño to thank for a fresh chance to flourish. Dr David Harper and Munir Virani of Leicester University told the Earthwatch Convention Day in Oxford last Saturday that the fish eagles at the lake had been in decline. Over the past 15 years numbers had fallen by 50 per cent, and by 1996-97 they had stopped breeding.

This had been blamed on pesticides, but the Leicester scientists found that it was lack of food: the birds were feeding barely enough to survive. Then along came El Niño and the heaviest rains in Kenyan history. The lake level rose by three metres, flooding huge areas and providing lots of food for fish and, indirectly, for fish eagles. They began to breed again. The bounty should last a couple of seasons, ensuring the birds' survival for up to ten years.

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"I believe we all have our allotted time in this world, and Terry had his. That's how I've come to terms with it," says his widow Diana

I'm not over it yet

Within the marble-effect walls of Diana Donovan's large, white Kensington villa is an air of smooth-running orderliness bordering on perfection. It is a fitting showcase for its owner: slim, tanned, with her hair in an elegant bob, and wearing a minimalist black suit. The scenario seems flawless, but deceptively so — her husband, the photographer Terence Donovan, took his own life in his studio in November 1996.

The sadness in Diana's blue eyes is all too evident as she talks about the man she was married to for 26 years. "I'm afraid I'm still not very good at talking about him," she says, sitting at the table where in times past they enjoyed so many family dinners. "I'm still devastated. I haven't got over it."

The reason she is forcing herself to recall the man she loved so dearly was yesterday's opening — by Lord Puttnam, who first introduced Terence to Diana — of a retrospective exhibition, *The Eye That Never Sleeps*. It features 130 black-and-white prints, a reflection of Donovan's love for London over four decades, but is a fraction of a vast archive of work that Diana has

In her first interview since Terence Donovan's death, his widow Diana talks to Noreen Taylor



Inspiring: Terence Donovan from the local dustmen to Diana: Princess of Wales. Yet none of it made his life worth living beyond the age of 60. Why? The question is as hard to form as it is for her to answer, though it is one that she must reflect on constantly.

"I believe we all have our allotted time in this world and Terry had his. That's how I've come to terms with what has happened. Without my faith I don't know how I would have coped. Visiting my local church, sitting somewhere quiet, contemplating, helps the healing process. I don't talk

about Terry to anyone. We were private people who opened up only to each other."

When they wed, in 1970, her friends gave the marriage a month. Indeed, Diana St Fehx Dart, a convent-educated girl from a colonial Guyanese background, hardly seemed the ideal match for the self-made man still attached to his East End roots. I told Diana her husband a decade ago he joked about loving the look on people's faces when he introduced them to her: "Very special lady, my wife. She's the backbone of my life, and not at all the sort you would imagine me with."

She laughs at the memory: "It's true. You wouldn't automatically have put us together. But from the start I was fascinated by his acute intelligence. The way he looked at things was unique. He made me laugh, feel safe. Class didn't come into it. He was a gentleman, thoughtful, the kind of man who would be surrounded by women seconds after entering a room. Women loved Terry, loved finding in him."

Although she would disagree, it does seem that she made sacrifices for him. Donovan's work always came first, and his five-nights-a-week judo sessions were not negotiable either.

"I'd been working as a film publicist when we met, but I gave up work when we had our children. We gave each other room to breathe. I respect the commitment necessary for creative work. I accepted that I would be the one attending the parents' meetings."

"I had my interests. I was always doing some kind of course; whenever we discussed a subject I knew something about, Terry would laugh and say 'I suppose you've done a course on that, too.'

Diana's children, Terry, 21, and Daisy, 24, remain close and have been a great support to Diana: "I don't know how I would have survived without them." Her emotional fragility seems close to the surface as she adds: "Everybody wanted a little piece of Terry. He seemed so accessible to people, made time for them. In that respect he was like Diana." Donovan was one of the Princess of Wales's favourite photographers and she was a chief mourner at his memorial service. "For someone young enough to be my daughter, she seemed to understand a lot of what I was going through."

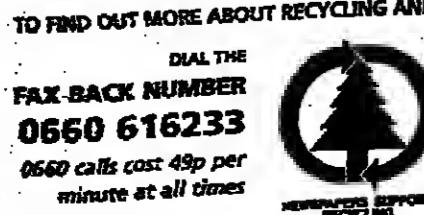
"We met through Well Being, one of the charities I worked for. Although I couldn't describe her as one of my closest friends, she was incredibly kind to me and the children after he died."

The giant-sized man has clearly left an enormous gap in her life, an abyss that she has tried to avoid by creating a daily structure that begins with a 6.45am run around Kensington Gardens, and continues with a schedule as packed as that of any corporate executive.

As well as acting as keeper of the Donovan photographic

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collection — she is working on a book — there are other roles. She chairs the Arts Foundation and the English National Ballet School, finding time also to be a special projects consultant to N M Rothschild. She has had to give up, at least for the moment, the hospice work she began after nursing her mother: "You aren't allowed to work with the dying for two years after you've had a bereavement." She adds: "I don't plan any more. I have a vague picture of what might happen, but I'm just not strong on plans these days."

● *The Eye That Never Sleeps, sponsored by Denison Hall, is at the Museum of London until August 1.*

Escape from fire nine floors up

Thursday: We are sitting in our local Starbucks on Broadway at 102nd St, an Upper West Side hang-out filled with Columbia grad students nursing solitary cappuccinos, when a fire engine honks past. By the time it has finished my decaf latte another seven, accompanied by as many NYPD squad cars, have roared their way up towards the Columbia campus, scattering yellow cab in their wake. A police helicopter is throbbling ominously above and so, like the Three Kings following the star, we take a detour home and track its position up Broadway until we find ourselves pressed up against NYPD crowd barriers at 107th St. In front of us is a scene that ignites a special fear in the heart of all Manhattan sky-dwellers. A beautiful, rose-brick, 11-storey apartment building, known locally as the Wedding Cake for its ornate facade, is in flames.

"How did it start?" I ask a fellow gawper. He nods towards a restaurant awning at sidewalk level, "Cafe Fiesta Mexicana," he says. "I guess their jalapeño peppers got too hot."

As the ladders of the fire-tenders telescope tentatively towards the upper-floor windows, a 20ft fountain of flame spurts from the roof. There are hundreds of firefighters rushing in and out of the building now, and black smoke is churning out of the heat-cracked windows, unuttered by the geysers of water being sprayed. Then a cry goes up from the crowd as a woman appears at a ninth-floor window holding a little bundle.

"It's a baby," screams the woman next to me, aghast. The mother beckons to a fireman who tests at the very end of his ladder, but even from behind our crowd barrier we can see that the ladder falls tantalisingly about five feet short. Suddenly she drops the little bundle into the wobbling cradle of the fireman's outstretched arms and the crowd gives another unified gasp. He holds it gingerly down to a colleague below him on the ladder and climbs back up. The mother disappears from the window, only to return with another baby, who is similarly rescued.

As the fire continues to rage the police push us further back, and we rush home to watch the drama unfold on cable. The news anchor informs us that 345 firefighters from 79 different units are now on the scene and the blaze is being classified as an eight-alarm fire — each alarm representing a call for further units to attend. It is the highest alarm fire in New York for four years.

Friday: We pore over the papers' coverage of the fire with horror for, like many New Yorkers, we have no fire escape or sprinklers and

are uncertain of what to do in a similar emergency. We are appalled to read that it took only 20 minutes for the flames to reach the 11th floor, shooting up a service shaft, skipping several floors and bursting out onto the roof before most of the residents knew that anything was wrong. Thirty-three of them ended up in hospital, though the rescued babies, six-week-old twins, were unscathed. But the most disturbing detail was the advice from the fire chief on the scene. Commissioner Von Essen instructed his men to run along each floor, banging on doors and ordering residents to evacuate immediately.

"But that completely contradicts the advice we were given after the Macaulay Cuklin fire at Christmas," exclaims Peter. In that case, Cuklin's mother evacuated her family from their apartment on 60th Street after a fire broke out in her bedroom. But she failed to close the door behind her and a blaze whipped along the corridor.

As the flames vaulted from floor to floor, residents abandoned their apartments and rushed to the stairwell to escape. But four of them never made it and were discovered lying dead, having suffocated from the fumes.

The following day the fire department gives warning that, in a similar situation, we should not leave our apartments but should stay inside, open our windows and place rolled-up, damp towels under the front door.

Saturday: Our friend Michael calls in a state of some gloom. He and his wife, expecting their first child, are in the process of relinquishing their two-bedroom apartment in Manhattan for a four-bedroom house in Brooklyn. But on Thursday, a block away from their intended new home, Amy Watkins, a 26-year-old student, was stabbed to death walking home from the subway. The NYPD says that she was stabbed in the back with such force that the murder weapon, a kitchen knife, had gone right through her.

The truth is that we have got so used to hearing that New York's murder rate has dropped to its lowest point in 30 years that we have become blasé. But this week the NYPD announces its quarterly crime statistics, which reveal that the murder rate has risen for the first quarter of this year, the first such rise in five years. It's not a vast increase, but it has tempered the buoyancy of New York's renaissance with the spectre of the bad old days when crazed crackheads held the city in fear.

Still, we find ourselves rationalising with Michael that the fact the murder is such a big news story here is comforting confirmation of its rarity.



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They grip their guns more tightly

A murder has hardened IRA attitudes, says Martin Fletcher

Crossmaglen in South Armagh must be the only town in the United Kingdom that has erected a memorial in its square not to the dead of the two World Wars, but to the dead of the IRA. "Glory to you all, praised and humble heroes, who have willingly suffered for your unselfish and passionate love of Irish freedom," reads the inscription beneath a statue of a youth astride an eagle.

Dozens of soldiers and police have been killed in and around the town during the past 30 years. Crossmaglen is the heartland of militant republicanism and, even before loyalists murdered Rosemary Nelson, the human rights lawyer, on Monday, there was no support there for IRA disarmament.

I bad, by coincidence, spent Monday morning taking the pulse of the town. Everyone told me the same thing. The Unionist demand for IRA disarmament was a "stalling device", a "trick". If the IRA complied, the Unionists would simply demand something else. There was no way that they would let Sinn Fein into government.

The town was awash with black and yellow bunting. As President Clinton discusses the decommissioning deadlock with Gerry Adams and David Trimble in the White House today, the Crossmaglen Rangers Irish Football team will be playing Ballina in the all-Ireland final.

"What's happening in Washington is just a sideshow," said Paddy Short, a Crossmaglen publcan who is Clare Short's uncle. The match was what mattered to the townfolk. They had given up on politics. If Mr Adams tried to deliver IRA disarmament, "the Provos would tell him to mind his own business".

The IRA must start to disarm to prevent the collapse of the Good Friday accord, but if hopes of that happening are slim before Mrs Nelson's murder, they were all but shredded afterwards.

The murder, timed to cause maximum damage to the peace process, tapped into the very heart of republican folklore. It reinforced the republicans' perception of themselves as a community besieged by loyalist paramilitaries, aided by the security forces of an oppressive British State. Sinn Fein, hell-bent on securing the Royal Ulster Constabulary's disbandment, shamelessly exploited the murder.

Indeed John O'Dowd, a local Sinn Fein councillor, marched straight up to me when I arrived at the scene, within an hour of the explosion, and unequivocally declared that the RUC was responsible.

There is no evidence to support the Sinn Fein accusation. But the circumstances of the bombing play to republican grievances, and reinforce their determination to keep the weapons they need to "defend" themselves. The manner of Mrs Nelson's death, her unpopularity with the security forces, her role as legal champion of nationalist causes, and revived accusations of collusion between paramilitaries

comment@the-times.co.uk

'I cannot wait to welcome the first stout-booted green anorak who clammers enthusiastically over my garden fence'

This is a big morning for me. It is as big a morning as I have seen in 40 years, it is a morning that stands poised to change the entire course of my life, because, having spent those four decades searching for a style with a y, I suddenly find myself searching for a style with an l. Two styles, in fact — one for my eastern fence, one for my western fence.

Now, you will say: hang about, that is a bit pretentious even for him, his fences should be called left and right, they are only 50ft apart, you do not need map co-ordinates for a suburban garden, a Cricklewood lawn does not call for a compass, you can distinguish between his herbaceous borders without a sextant, but you are wrong.

Any minute now, people will be tramping down my road with Ordnance Survey Sheet No 176 and they will be serious people,

they will have stout boots, they will have sturdy sticks, they will have woolly hats, they will have lumpy knapsacks, and they will be thinking in terms not of left and right but of east and west, for that is the kind of serious people they are.

And you may be sure they will not take it at all kindly if, having gone to all the trouble of navigating by the stars and working out my longitude to three decimal points to get to my eastern or my western fence, they then find that they cannot climb over it. They will very likely start kicking it with their stout boots, or banging their sturdy sticks on it, or, at the very least, poking their woolly-hatted heads over it and shouting "Oy", and that is the last thing I want. Which is why the first thing I want is a pair of stiles, set in my two fences so that serious people can climb over them.

Alan Coren

Because, thanks to the generosity of our great Environment Secretary, they will any minute now have the Right To Roam, and it is incumbent upon each and every one of us to be ready for them. Indeed, to welcome them with open arms, for they are paying us a very great compliment in wanting to ramble across our premises: they have waited a long time to see my daffodil fluttering and dancing in the breeze, to have a squint inside my lovely shed, to feel the hoe, sketch the shears, sniff the Parauat, to take one another's photographs leaning on my rustic Homebase bench, climb to the top of my towering rockery from which it is possible, on a clear day, to see three major roads, and, scrambling down to

the shimmering expanse of water beneath, step across it, and find some sheltered spot — beside my sun-dappled car, perhaps, or on my mossy kitchen step — to eat their organic sandwiches and brew their herbal tea.

I cannot for the life of me understand why so many of my fellow landowners were so enraged at the announcement of the proposed legislation, so fearful of the imminent incursions of the wandering nerd, so desperate to hurl themselves into the hedge to exclude him. For myself, I cannot wait for the first green anorak to clamber over my fence, mistake me for the gardener, and, chucklingly set straight on the matter, whip out his ring-bound notebook and rain-

proof pen and begin keenly to quiz me on local lore.

How I long to point out the rutted bit of lawn which stands as undisputed evidence of where the extinct Crickle once flourished, through the boar-parked wood of which my gnarled acacia is the sole survivor! How I yearn to take his arm and lead him to the sacred site, possibly by the dustbins, maybe behind the garage, where rumour has it that woaded Corens fought to the last man to dwarf Caesar's march on Hendon! How I relish the thought of filling him in on the restless ghosts of drawn and quartered highwaymen who, having once lurked beside my compost heap to plague the Edgware Stage, now cry "Stand and deliver" every Martinmas Eve. I may even take them up to the Big House to show them the unique systems of plumbing and painting and guttering and

drive-laying created, just for me, by generations of itinerant artists who brought to Cricklewood the arcane techniques honed to perfection on the bodies of Limeick.

I

may start doing cream teas. I may take a correspondence course in morris dancing. I may embark upon the felt-up monogramming of souvenir items in lustrous Crickleware from Bhs, or bottling zesty relishes and acne remedies distilled from my own conkers, or stringing chic necklaces of interesting local pebbles, and set up Ye Olde Estate Suitcase, by the gate, to sell them. Aha, you cry, so that is the truth of it, he supports the Right To Roam because he sees a bob or two in it, but you are wrong. I support it because, for those 40 long years, I have been, only a mere householder. But today, thanks to Michael Meacher, I am a landowner.

JASPER GERARD



JACQUES THE JOKER, THE QUEEN OF SLEAZE AND A HOUSE OF CARDS

Derail the gravy train

The Commission has taken Europe for a ride, now it must be abolished

grain silo or half-built tenement and it is probably the EU's. The smouts were raised from the trough only long enough to cry "Xenophobia!"

The British and Scandinavian participants in these shenanigans claim to have been a restraining hand. We must believe it. In contrast, France was still claiming on Monday night that Mme Cresson had done nothing wrong. In these matters, Paris, Madrid, Lisbon and Rome inhabit a separate moral realm. They make good

blown only after the press had taken up the cause of an auditor whom the Commission was persecuting for revealing its frauds. The media rammed its message down the throats of enough MEPs.

The Union's apologists say that this proves the virtue of stronger parliamentary control, to fill the Commission's famous democratic chasm. It does no such thing.

International bodies, such as the European Commission are unrepresentative. Half the trouble in Brussels, as at the UN, is

European farming over the past three decades.

By comparison, the Commission is an eerie being, secretive and self-important. It can flatter the Parliament with question times and reports. It can even half-resign from time to time, much as Henry II took up the scourge. But it will make no difference. The Commission is a bureaucratic entity that does not mirror a political one. It can perpetuate but not legitimate itself. As Europe widens, it also fragments. The euro may prove to be the last cry of the postwar settlement.

To read yesterday's Brussels document is to wonder to a land a thousand miles from Britain. Its inhabitants seem detached from the political cultures they supposedly serve and on whose taxes they depend; a world of ceaseless conferences, projects and programmes of consultancies, agencies, trips and back-handerers. These international bodies are like the pre-Reformation episcopates. Safe in their comfortable sinecures, they can rely on a cosmopolitan priesthood to whom they offer a plausible mission statement, first-class travel and no great burden of work beyond proselytising the cause. Nobody ever abolishes them.

National governments, for all their imperfection, are the proper focus for European co-operation. The Council of Ministers is their club. The Council should have no need for supranational bodies such as a European Commission or Parliament. I do not believe there is any popular demand to establish a truly potent supranational government of Europe. The French, Spanish and Germans are no more eager than the British to submerge their national interest in a new supranationalism. They may be more canny in pursuing that interest in the counsels of Europe. That is quite different. Mine Cresson, a true European? It is a joke.

A whistle-blower has stopped this particular train in its tracks. Today it stands puffing and blowing off steam while the crew argues on the platform. But until someone has the courage to admit that international bodies can sometimes outlive their usefulness, it will not be stopping for long. The sceptics have had their moment of joy.

comment@the-times.co.uk



Gallery search

THE huge Nazi art scandal that hit the National Gallery is set to engulf the Tate. Sir Nicholas Serota, its Jewish director, has appointed a team of experts to examine the provenance of his collection, fearing that up to 700 works "could potentially bring problems".

As head of a cross-gallery working group into "taffied art", Serota (below) feels obliged to rummage in his own cupboard: toilers are sweating through his 61,000-strong collection — which includes daubs by Picasso, Matisse and Sargent — to check for looted works. "Only a few hundred at most could cause difficulty," I am assured.



PENGUIN-exporting is the latest royal money-spinner. Lord Harewood, the Queen's cousin, is packing 12 of the sea sorts off to Shanghai. Harewood House Bird Garden has signed a replacement: a mynah bird, who can do "very good impressions of fire engines".

■ DOUGLAS HOGG has found the solution to the dilemma that so dented papa's career: he intends to remain in the Commons and inherit the Viscountcy of Hailsham.

As part of his failed attempt to become PM, Quintin Hogg disclaimed his title as the 2nd Viscount in 1963 so that he could return to the Commons. He was given a life peerage seven years later, becoming Lord Hailsham of Saint Marylebone. Anthony King, constitutional expert, says: "You can't stop someone using a title. It's a jolly outcome." Will Baroness Hogg, Douglas's wife and the head of John Major's policy unit, start calling herself Viscountess?

THE Diary tip for Cheltenham, courtesy of Michael Howard, who now has more time to spend with his tick-tack Teeton Mill for the Gold Cup; Norman Williamson for the jockeys' championship.



■ PAUL BURRELL is carrying on his mistress's good work by tending to Paul Michael Glaser — Starsky to David Soul's Hutch. The royal butler to Diana, Princess of Wales, will meet Glaser next week: the actor was comforted by the Princess after his wife and daughter died of Aids. "I grew up with Starsky and Hutch," says Burrell, who, faintly surreal, shared a table with Antonio "Huggy Bear" Fargas and at Grosvenor House.

THE air will fill with light chatter about the Blackwell Tunnel digging works at Scots when the manager has a hundred taxi drivers in the back of his restaurant: this is to celebrate its inclusion in the Knowledge, the only joint to be so honoured.

■ UNIONS are to make ministers pay Millennium Dome workers fat wages — for the inconvenience of seeing in the new epoch. After 90 performers were chosen for the millennial show, Equity is demanding special rates and TV rights. The New Millennium Dome Experience Company is cross: "You can't compare performers to waiters getting £1,000 on the millennium. It's fairly clear the jobs entail working on New Year's Eve."

HAVING rallied his troops to "break free from the past", William Hague supped with Sir Edward Heath.

■ THAT champion of good causes, Mohamed Al Fayed, wants to launch an anti-smoking campaign. Inspired by Rory Bremner's impersonation, Mo wants to appear in adverts with the inscription "fug fags". ASH is now asking Mo to fund a legal campaign against British tobacco companies.

FIFTY-EIGHT

The terrible



GET OUT, STAY OUT

For any Commissioners to keep their jobs is illegal and wrong

The European Union today presents a sobering spectacle. Its untested currency has, with good reason, yet to win the faith of the markets. Unemployment higher than at any time since the 1930s is a standing reproach to its political class. Germany, its anchor economy, is politically as well as economically adrift; and failures to tackle structural reform are making the EU a high-cost, low-growth drag on the world economy. Trade wars with the United States go unresolved; and enlargement, Europe's great strategic imperative, is being held hostage to endless quarrels over controlling the EU's spending and cleaning up pork-barrel regional and structural funds and the indefensibly spendthrift common agricultural policy.

The EU's supranational institutions, thrust naked this week into the limelight, are in no better shape. The incompetence, cronyism, fraud and sharp practice that have long riddled the European Commission, publicly chronicled year after year by the EU's Court of Auditors in reports left to gather dust, have led only now — and only in the certainty that the Commission would otherwise be sacked by the European Parliament — to the collective resignation of its President, Jacques Santer, and the entire complacent, arrogant and mostly second-rate team selected, let it not be forgotten, by EU members.

As for the Parliament, the triumphalist claims of MEPs to have struck a great blow for probity and democracy — conveniently, and not coincidentally, on the eve of facing their electorates — would be more credible were they not famously passengers on their own rich gravy train of excessive perks and fiddled expenses. And Pauline Green, the leader of its Socialist Group, has not so much discovered virtue but had it thrust upon her. Last December, when she tabled a motion of censure against the whole Commission while whipping her group to vote against it, her aim was to defeat the critics and protect the Commission's back. Only because some German and other north European Socialists broke ranks to side with a reforming minority did her tactic misfire, forcing Mr Santer to agree to the independent inquiry which issued its first report on Monday.

In a limp language, whose meaning no bureaucrat can twist, these four wise men and one wise woman delivered, to their great credit, a censuring indictment not just of individual commissioners, but of the entire management and corporate culture of the European Commission. They have made an incontestable case, in Tony Blair's words, for "root and branch reform". Will this finally happen? Not if governments, while talking grandly about Europe's great opportunity for "renewal", see no more evil in Brussels than is politically expedient. Not unless they change the management — the entire management — forthwith. Not unless they insist on credible systems to hold commissioners and bureaucrats to account. And not unless they appoint a new team with a brief not just to root out malpractices but to shut down entire programmes, such as tourism and humanitarian aid, which the Commission is incompetent to manage and which should never have been added to its ever-expanding empire. What is needed is a cultural revolution as fundamental as that imposed by the Trevelyan reforms on the British Army after the Crimean War.

Nothing is less certain. The suicide ritual was barely ended before this undead Commission rose unrepentant to its feet, with even Edith Cresson saying that she had no need to clear her name because the Commission was collectively responsible. Mr Santer had the gall to "note with considerable satisfaction that I am whiter than white", to make a bid to stay on himself and to insist that the entire commission could be "renegotiated". The independent experts observed: "The temptation to deprive the concept of responsibility of all substance is a dangerous one." To that temptation, the commissioners and most EU governments seem ready to yield.

FIFTY-EIGHT DAYS TO DIE

The terrible case of Mary Ormerod

The allegations surrounding the death of 85-year-old Mary Ormerod provoke the deepest disquiet. Her doctor, Ken Taylor, is charged with "serious professional misconduct". Those three words camouflage the severity of the accusation — that he departed from the standards expected of healers to hasten her passing. "I did not kill" Mrs Ormerod, he claims. But the fear that he unethically accelerated nature's course lingers, disturbingly. And so does the need better to guide doctors through the moral and medical dilemmas which govern the passage from painful illness to easeful death.

Mrs Ormerod had suffered seven strokes and had severe dementia and mild Parkinson's disease diagnosed. The nurses claim that Dr Taylor ordered them to stop giving her a food supplement, and that they protested. Mrs Ormerod, it appears, was not in a permanent vegetative state. She was not being fed artificially, but could swallow food injected into her mouth. The medical hearing was told that Dr Taylor's medical notes did not suggest her condition was deteriorating. Fifty-eight days after the order to withdraw her food, Mrs Ormerod died. The inquest recorded the cause as broncho-pneumonia, brought on by malnutrition.

This supposedly cathartic drama could end up as a "Japanese" purge, in which beads roll only to ensure that things continue much as before, with much the same discredited cast. That would be an outrage. The German Government is thinking along these lines. It has called on the whole team to stay on as caretakers and is thinking in terms of a "new" interim Commission drawn mainly from the current 19 commissioners, to serve out this year. Mr Blair has demanded Mr Santer's head; but he has discredited himself as a reformer by insisting that Sir Leon Brittan and Neil Kinnock, the two British Commissioners, be reappointed. This special pleading will prompt other governments to say that their commissioners too should stay: none will want to admit that "their" people are more bent than others.

To reappoint them would be illegal under the Treaty on European Union. Article 159 states categorically not only that a resigning Commission President must be "replaced", it says that "the duties of a member of the Commission shall end when he resigns... the vacancy thus caused shall be filled for the remainder of the member's term of office by a new member". In Brussels and EU capitals, lawyers are citing the more ambiguous Articles 144 and 158 as a justification for reappointing Commissioners. But these articles deal with a parliamentary vote of censure; since none took place, they are irrelevant to the case.

Sir Leon and Mr Kinnock did not have to resign: they did so as part of a collective manoeuvre to shield others, including Mr Santer, from taking individual responsibility. They must accept the consequences of their choice, and go just as Mr Blair should be insisting, as did William Hague yesterday, that Mr Santer and other commissioners faulted by the inquiry should clear their desks at once. Brussels can function with a skeleton caretaker team, which in any event should serve for no more than a few more weeks.

Only if the Council of Ministers upholds the treaties and sweeps the table bare can they credibly claim to address, under new management, the agenda for reform. This should not be the partisan affair that Mr Blair, in his contemptuous treatment of Mr Hague's pertinent proposals in the Commons yesterday, made of it. Mr Blair has some good ideas, notably the need to establish individual accountability right through the bureaucracy, and to prevent improper uses of consultants and outside contractors. But he should have welcomed, rather than jeered at, the practical thinking on the Opposition benches.

Mr Hague is right that commissioners should abide by a clear code of ministerial responsibility, and that powers must be created to dismiss them individually for fraud or maladministration. He is right about the need for binding codes of conduct covering the appointment of senior Brussels bureaucrats, ending the commissioners' corrupt habit of "parachuting" former MEPs and cronies from their personal cabinets into lucrative Commission posts.

He is right that Mr Blair's ideas about financial auditing do not go far enough and that the independence of a new anti-fraud unit must be guaranteed by having it report directly to the Council of Ministers. He is right that the solution to the Commission's plea that it does not have enough staff is to shrink its ever-expanding role by returning the administration of some programmes to national control.

There is no precedent for this crisis. That is where the "opportunity" that Mr Blair perceives resides. But he seems chiefly nervous that the "sad catalogue of negligence and mismanagement", which has not so much been revealed as finally thrust under the public's nose, will be "another chance to bash Europe". It is nothing of the kind. But timidity and half-measures on his part, at this critical point, could make his fears come true. For Europe's sake, Mr Blair will have face the necessity of offending some of his European friends.

'Scandal and incompetence' of EU Commissioners

From Mr Malcolm Hill

Sir, Your leader today refers to the culture of corruption which has afflicted the EU since the 1980s.

Before blaming individuals or the low standards of public administration in Spain and France, let it be remembered that the Council of Ministers is responsible for the growth of this culture. They have created policies of discredited protectionism and endorsed regulations of such silliness and complexity, that corruption on a vast scale has been unleashed in many fields: notably agriculture, fish, the single market and three fixed currency regimes.

The belief that only a few individuals are tainted in the present exposure is ridiculous.

Yours faithfully,
MALCOLM HILL,
58a Abingdon Road, W8 6AP.
March 16.

From Mr F. W. J. Whitstone

Sir, By resigning en bloc the European Commissioners have taken the only sensible course in view of the refusal of Edith Cresson and perhaps other named Commissioners to resign.

However, senior Labour and Conservative politicians are in danger of undermining the whole reform programme. By calling for the retention of the blameless British Commissioners, a step which the Germans will, I am sure, follow, it will become a matter of French and Spanish pride that their two (each) Commissioners will be reinstated. If that happens little or nothing would be achieved.

Hard though it may be, Sir Leon Brittan and Neil Kinnock must allow their resignations to stand, if for no other purpose than to show that there is some honour left in British politics, and, after all, there must be some corporate responsibility.

The Government and the Conservatives must get together and reverse their "shoot from the hip" policy, or cynicism about politicians will become even greater than it is at present.

I am, your obedient servant,
F. W. J. WHITSTONE,
Basses Manor,
Hartfield, Sussex TN7 4LA.
March 16.

The ever closer union

From Miss Dorothy Harris

Sir, Three cheers for the forthright article by Peter Shore which highlights some aspects of the true nature of the European Union ("Who are you kidding, Mr Blair?", March 8).

This is a much more realistic view than that portrayed by Mary Ann Sieghart (article, March 5). She seemed to believe that this country can be in the EU and remain free to choose what we take from it. The Maastricht treaty will not allow a two-tier Europe — "ever closer union" is the ultimate objective, and our fellow Europeans make no secret of that.

Ms Sieghart believes that Britain will be able to veto and resist, for instance, "endless proposals for harmonisation". In the Europe to which we unfortunately belong, such matters are not proposed and then debated and withheld. Decisions of the European Court of Justice show quite clearly how tax harmonisation or any other European matter will come about. The recent decision in *ICV v Colmar* demonstrates how any European country can go to the court and challenge UK tax laws as being in opposition to the single market, and this country has then to comply. There will be nothing Tony Blair or any prime minister can do about it.

The EU is not democratic. All the laws we have to implement here come from 20 unelected people — the Commissioners. The Parliament, like the old Soviet one, is a sop.

When will people realise just what has happened to this country and its much vaunted freedoms, won over the centuries at such great cost?

Yours faithfully,
DOROTHY HARRIS,
Pot Hill House, Dial Post,
Horsham, West Sussex RH13 8NX.
March 9.

The Bulger case

From Mr Roddy Gye

Sir, At the time of their conviction and sentencing, I argued through your columns (letter, December 2, 1995) for compassion for James Bulger's young killers. I was rewarded with an anonymous telephone call advising me to "try telling that to the Bulger family".

Of the various intents of a custodial sentence — containment, deterrence, rehabilitation — retribution is the least edifying in a civilised society. In the case of child criminals it should be unconstitutional.

The Bulger family, in their continuing grief, should seek no comfort in the destruction of two more young lives. Nor, on the matter of sentencing, should the judiciary in Britain or Europe be swayed by the opinions of victims or their families, in the style of the Sharia courts. The criminal law serves and protects society as a whole, victims and culprits alike, and should be administered with dispassion.

Yours faithfully,
RODDY GYE,
9 Orlando Road, SW4 0LE.
March 16.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Linking race and ability in schools

From Mr Ray Ward

Sir, George Bridges's excellent article, "Playgrounds for political correctness" (March 12), is somewhat marred by his dismissal of the premise that colour and ability are linked followed by his statement that the performance of Indian, Chinese and other Asian pupils (carefully not mentioning other racial groups) continues to outstrip white children.

Doesn't that imply that colour — or at any rate race — and ability are linked?

Yours faithfully,
RAY WARD,
Flat 97,
17 Sheppard Drive, SE16 3EJ.
March 12.

From Mrs Marion Leeper

Sir, I was appalled by the complacency of George Bridges's article suggesting that multicultural education was nothing more than unnecessary political correctness. He suggests that being colour-blind is good enough: that teachers should stick to maths and English and that moral and social education is none of their business.

Many teachers are seriously trying to confront racism and develop an education fit for a multicultural society. To be told that we should stick to worrying about league tables and exam results and forget about the education of the whole child does not help us.

Children today are bound to meet people with different skin colours, cultures and religions. They have to learn that it is good to be different: that other cultures, as well as their own, are exciting, valuable and worth respecting.

I wish Mr Bridges could have seen the expression of joy on the face of the Japanese boy in my class when I introduced a topic on Japan, and seen the children learning about difference in its most practical form as they tasted sushi for the first time, wrote haiku poetry, played with chopsticks and origami.

This is not being politically correct: it is valuable learning, it is fun, and it may even improve our league-table performance.

Yours sincerely,
MARION LEEPER
(Primary school teacher),
The Old Vicarage,
4 Stretton Avenue,
Cambridge CB4 3EP.
March 13.

From Mr Michael Austin

Sir, Ofsted's own figures (report, March 11) show a school exclusion rate of 160 per 1,000 for black Caribbean pupils and 5 per 1,000 for Chinese. It is inconceivable to me that such a huge disparity could be accounted for by teachers' alleged racial prejudices, unwitting or otherwise.

Yours faithfully,
MICHAEL AUSTIN,
10 Blagdon Close,
Creditor, Devon EX17 1EL.
March 12.

From Mr John Whittle

Sir, If our education system is institutionally biased against certain ethnic groups, it follows with inescapable logic that it is also biased in favour of Chinese pupils.

I believe the safest assumption to make about any "official" statements on racism is, where these are not utter nonsense, they may simply be untrue.

Yours,
JOHN WHITTLE,
18 Garstang Road,
Preston PR2 8QJ.
jw@e2e2.com
March 12.

Princes in the Tower

From Mrs Fabienne Smith

Sir, Your Diary (March 13) reports that Prince Edward's firm, Ardent, wants to exhume the two Princes in the Tower from their resting place in Westminster Abbey. This has already been done, in 1933.

In 1987 you reported the findings of a comparison of the Princes' bones with those of their cousin, Anne Mowbray, who was married to the younger Prince when she was six, and died aged nine ("Modern science convicts Richard III of murder", May 21, 1987).

The boys' blood relationship to Anne, and their precise age at death, were established, confirming that the skeletons were indeed the Princes, and that they died during Richard's reign.

Yours sincerely,
FABIENNE SMITH,
55 Manor Place,
Edinburgh EH3 7EG.
March 13.

Stealth defence?

From Mr Barry Pixton

Sir, So the Chairman of British Invisibles attended dinner with the Royal Navy Board, did he (letter, March 16)? How do you know?

Yours faithfully,
BARRY PIXTON,
6 Hevellyn Drive,
Burnley, Lancashire BB12 0TA.
barrypixton@lineone.net
March 16.

Business letters, page 29

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Dracula's dancing queen

Arts, page 35

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THE TIMES

BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft

WEDNESDAY MARCH 17 1999

Rattle at his best

Arts, page 36

French offer up to \$6bn for stake in troubled Japanese carmaker

Renault takes wheel at Nissan



Schweizer: veto power

RENAULT, the French carmaker, moved yesterday to become one of the world's big five manufacturers when it offered to buy 35 per cent stake in Nissan, the troubled Japanese auto group.

The deal is likely to be worth between \$4 billion and \$6 billion (£2.5 billion to £3.7 billion). It raises questions over the long-term future of Nissan's factory in Sunderland, although most analysts expect the plant to survive.

The stake, taken by Louis Schweizer, the chairman of Renault, will give him veto power over Nissan and the

likelihood of three seats on the Japanese company's board.

Carlos Ghosn, the second-in-command at Renault, who is given much of the credit for the French company's return to financial health, is tipped to become the director-general of Nissan.

The two carmakers are likely to share research and development costs in the short term and manufacturing plants in the longer term.

With Nissan, Japan's second-largest car manufacturer after Toyota, sagging under an excess production capacity, estimated at almost 500,000 ve-

hicles a year, French analysts called into question the future of Nissan's Sunderland plant.

Commentators said M Schweizer would not look kindly on a factory which produces cars that compete with Renault on the European market.

But Adam Collins, automobile analyst with Dresdner Kleinwort Benson, the securities house, said: "You have to bear in mind that the Sunderland plant is a trophy asset for Nissan in Europe."

The plant, which was opened 12 years ago, is widely seen as the most productive

outside Japan. It employs 4,300 workers and turns out 289,000 cars a year. A further 800 workers are being recruited for the introduction of a new Almera model that will be made next year, raising production levels to about 350,000 annually.

A Nissan spokesman insisted yesterday that the £215 million Almera investment is safe. Sunderland workers on the late shift were told about the alliance last night.

Renault and Nissan will have combined annual sales of

more than 4.5 million vehicles, placing them on a par with

Volkswagen and Toyota and behind General Motors and Ford, which recently bought Volvo, the Swedish niche manufacturer.

"I think this deal means you can put a tick in the two boxes that Renault needed to fill," said Mr Collins. "It will increase its size and have access to markets [in Asia and North America]."

But he said Renault, which made a profit of £9 billion (about £1 billion) last year, had taken a risk, given the scale of Nissan's debts of about £21 billion. If Nissan's share price continues to fall, M Schweizer

will emerge from the venture with burnt fingers.

For Nissan, which is losing market share in Japan and the US, the urgent need for a partner made it difficult to refuse the Gallic offer especially after DaimlerChrysler pulled out of talks last week.

Analysts said the French State still retains a 44 per cent stake in Renault, the firm's reputation for innovation and its recent success in cutting costs won the approval of Nissan's chairman, Yoshikazu Hanawa, according to sources in Tokyo.

Surplus suggests Brown will beat forecasts

By ALASDAIR MURRAY

THE Government recorded another healthy budget surplus in March, leaving the City convinced that the Chancellor will beat his revised full-year borrowing forecasts.

The Treasury, however, insisted that the traditional year-end departmental spending spree would leave the final figure close to the Budget prediction of a £5.2 billion surplus.

February's public sector net cash requirement (PSNCR) surplus of £1.5 billion was marginally below City expectations. However, the Government is in surplus to the tune of £15.13 billion over the first 11 months of the financial year, compared with just £6.18 billion at the same point last year.

Adam Cole, UK economist at HSBC, said the end-of-year spending spree would need to be £4 billion larger than in the same month last year for the Government to hit its target. Although spending has crept up over the past 12 months, it is only running about 2.5 per cent higher than in 1997/98.

Mr Cole said: "Gordon Brown could well find himself with considerably more room for manoeuvre in next year's Budget than his current arithmetic implies."

LINKS

WEBSITE: www.hm-treasury.gov.uk
Weekend Money website: www.theweekendmoney.co.uk

Business Today

Commentary: Echoes of irrational exuberance 27
Stock Markets: Buyout talk spurs JJB 28
Equity prices: 32
Unit trusts: 34



The long haul
UK truckers fly the flag of convenience
Page 29

FTSE 100: 4,670.00 (-4.0)
Yield: 2.52%
FTSE All Share: 2,662.31 (-1.21)
Midcap: 1,607.82 (+23.22)
New York:
Dow Jones: 8,647.95 (+8.97)
S&P Composite: 1,006.54 (+1.29)

US RATE

Federal Funds: 4.75% (4.75%)
Long bond: 8.97% (8.97%)
Yield: 5.48% (5.32%)

London Money

3-month interbank: 5.75 (5.75%)
Bank of England base rate: 117.22 (118.64)

STERLING

New York:
\$: 1.8248* (1.8228)
London: 1.8243 (1.8217)
\$: 1.8243 (1.8217)
Euro: 2.2815 (2.2782)
Yen: 191.45 (191.64)
E. Index: 102.24 (102.3)

US DOLLAR

London: 1.0014* (1.0043)
\$: 1.0057* (1.0042)
Yen: 117.85 (117.58)
\$ Index: 108.8 (107.9)

Tokyo close Yen 117.88

NORTH SEA OIL

Barrel 3-day (Jun.): \$12.75 (n/a)

GOLD

London close: \$263.85 (228.95)
* denotes midday trading prices

Exchange rates: Page 26

Unigate in Terranova hostile bid

By SARAH CUNNINGHAM

UNIGATE, the food manufacturing group, has launched a hostile cash bid worth £22.5 million for Terranova, the chilled foods company that was spun off from Hillsdown last year.

Terranova immediately rejected the 125p share offer, calling it "an opportunistic bid designed to capture Terranova on the cheap". Shares in the company leapt from 104.5p to 135.5p, as investors bet on Unigate having to increase its offer. Unigate's shares were steady at 410p.

Unigate has long been in pursuit of the Terranova business, having come close to buying it before its demerger from Hillsdown.

Sir Ross Buckland, chief executive of Unigate, said that acquiring Terranova would create a sizeable European foods business. "A standalone Terranova has uncertain prospects, while our cash offer represents certainty," he said.

Dow Jones index scales landmark 10,000-point peak

By ALASDAIR MURRAY AND ANDREW BUTCHER

falling back into negative territory as profit-takers took the market as a cue to move back into the market. By lunchtime in New York, the Dow was standing down 20 points on the day.

Analysts were divided on whether the Dow would continue

Commentary 27

to push on to new heights, with market bears arguing that every new Dow record brought a sharp correction closer.

Lou Todd, head of equities trading at JC Bradford and Co, said: "There's not enough

leadership to take this market to major new highs."

However, Ralph Acampora, the high-profile optimist from Prudential Securities, said: "This is the next leg of the bull market and it's led by quality. You can't get any better than that. There's nothing irrational about any of this."

Most analysts date the beginning of the Wall Street bull run back four and half years, with the market growing by 150 per cent across the period, boosted by a "golden scenario" of economic growth and low inflation.

Although the Dow cleared the 9,000 mark as far back as last April, the emerging markets crisis took its toll in the autumn, when the index slipped back below 7,500 in October.

Wall Street's later retreat yesterday, however, took its toll of European stock markets, which had otherwise weathered the mass resignation of the European Commission.

In London the FTSE 100 index of leading shares closed down 4.9 points at 6,201.9 after earlier rising by as much as 60 points. The currency markets also shrugged off the repercussions of the EU crisis. The euro climbed against the dollar from a low of \$1.0810 to settle about \$1.0935 and rose from 66.80p to 67.25p.

DOW POWERS ON

Source: Dow Jones

January February March



Cheers of traders at the historic moment later subsided as the Dow fell into negative territory

Goldman partners in line for \$7m

By CAROLINE MERRELL, BANKING CORRESPONDENT

PARTNERS in Goldman Sachs, the US investment bank, will on average make \$7 million (£4.2 million) each under the terms of the flotation, revealed yesterday.

Eleven per cent of the bank, worth a total of \$3 billion, is to be sold off. About half of that, 5.5 per cent, is to be divided among the bank's 220 partners, who include Gavyn Davies, the bank's chief economist based in London and an adviser to the Prime Minister.

The amount each partner will get depends on their length of service. Partners will not be

able to access their shares for between three and five years. It is as yet uncertain what proportion of the residual 89 per cent is held by each partner. It is these stakes that make each of the partners' worth tens of millions of millions of dollars.

About 2.5 per cent will be divided among the bank's other 13,000 employees, giving average windfalls of about £50,000. Another 1 per cent will be reserved for former partners of Goldman Sachs. The public will be offered about 1 per cent with the remainder, about 1 per

cent, to be held by Sumitomo of Japan.

Shares in Goldman Sachs are expected to trade at about \$40 to \$50. The bank wants to raise capital so it can compete on a global scale with other US investment banks.

Goldman was forced to pull its flotation last year because of the sudden collapse in world markets.

At that time some within the bank voiced concerns about the flotation. They felt that it would change the unique culture of the bank. The original flotation plan did not give

shares to all employees. Last week partners voted overwhelmingly in favour of the new flotation plan.

The details came as the bank reported first-quarter pre-tax earnings of \$1.18 billion (£1 billion). Net revenues were \$2.9 billion and expenses were \$1.8 billion.

David Viniar, chief financial officer, said: "The firm's investment banking business performed well during the quarter particularly in financial advisory and debt underwriting, and assets under management continued to increase."

New policing move for the boys in Bluewater

By PAUL ARMSTRONG

THE owners of the £1.2 billion Bluewater shopping complex in north Kent have struck a radical deal with the local constabulary, buying themselves the services of 22 police officers at a cost of £750,000 a year.

The contract with Kent police guarantees that at least six bobbies are on the beat at Bluewater at any one time.

The service applies around the clock, seven days a week. It is thought to be the first time a British police force has

struck such an arrangement with the private sector, though officers are provided for a fee to police events that have potential for public disorder, such as football matches. Kent police also have an arrangement to provide a permanent presence at the Channel Tunnel.

Lend Lease, the developer behind the project, proposed the deal after its research found that shoppers preferred bobbies, particularly female ones, to provide security services.

Developers, page 29

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Premier Oil under siege

By CARL MORTISHED

PREMIER OIL is under siege from a rebel shareholder group that wants the company to pull out of Burma and sell assets in other politically isolated countries, such as Albania and Cuba.

Peter Felter, a lawyer at Clyde & Co, has learned up with Viscount Cranborne in a bid to launch a management takeover of the company whose chief executive is Charles Jamieson.

Mr Felter is proposing himself as chief executive and admits candidly: "I am trying to effect a shareholder rebellion." He reckons the Premier management's strategy has failed and objects to the Burmese investment on moral, financial and political grounds.

He said: "The political reality is the pro-democracy leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, has accused Premier of financially and morally supporting the regime. There are US sanctions against Burma and if the regime fails Premier could lose out badly." The rebels have created a website to publicise their proposals but have yet to requisition a meeting of shareholders.

Premier shares were unchanged at 13.5p yesterday, against a 12-month high of 51p. www.premier-oil.co.uk

Tarmac aims to unlock value with demerger

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY
INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

TARMAC yesterday pinned hopes of a share price surge on its plans to split the business into two companies. The demerger could be completed by the autumn.

The company is spinning off its construction services division from the traditional building materials business. The move was heralded last month after the failure of a £1.8 billion merger with Aggregate Industries.

Sir Neville Simms, who will lead the construction division as chairman and chief executive, said: "We will be able to unlock far more value by demerging." Shareholders will vote on the plans in the summer and the split should happen two months after that.

Sir Neville, currently group chief executive, said the demerger would not immediately lead to fresh merger moves with a rival. A number of other names, such as Amec and BICC's Balfour Beatty, have been linked with Tarmac, but Sir Neville said that no talks were under way.

However, analysts believe that the division will make would-be partners far more interested in Tarmac, whose share price has languished and which is seen as increasingly diverse as construction



Sir Neville Simms said the demerger would not lead to fresh merger moves with a rival

services moves further from the buildings side. Construction services comprises the higher-margin businesses of facilities management and the company's Private Finance Initiative work, which has been dogged by contract delays and bureaucratic procedures.

The building materials side

of Tarmac will retain the company name and have Roy Harrison, the director in charge of that operation, as its chief executive, with Sir John Banham, the current Tarmac chairman, retaining his role.

Debt will be split between the two companies and both will have progressive dividend

polices. Tarmac said: "Tarmac said pre-tax profits for the year to December 31 rose to £131.4 million from £115.2 million. Earnings per share increased 10.7 per cent to 9.3p. The final dividend of 2.8p (2.65p) lifted the total 27 per cent to 5.8p."

Tempus, page 28

EXCHANGE RATES

	Bank Buys	Bank Sales
Australia \$	2.70	2.69
Austria Sch.	21.47	19.81
Belgium Fr.	63.21	58.25
Denmark Kr.	2.00	1.97
Cyprus Cyp.	0.9051	0.8336
Denmark Kr.	11.65	10.76
Egypt	5.75	5.42
Finland Fr.	0.9	0.85
France Fr.	10.23	9.45
Germany Dm.	3.073	2.831
Greece Dr.	504	468
Hong Kong \$	11.42	10.89
Iceland	1.29	1.09
Indonesia	17972	12972
Ireland Pl.	1.2263	1.1373
Israel Shek.	6.91	6.25
Italy Lira	3050	2550
Japan Yen	206.29	188.76
Malta	0.674	0.615
Netherlands Gld.	3.470	3.175
New Zealand \$	1.22	1.12
Norway Kr.	13.31	12.37
Portugal Esc.	310.82	288.79
SAfrica Rand	10.29	9.70
Spain Peseta	291.05	240.23
Sweden Kr.	14.47	13.07
Switzerland Fr.	2.533	2.315
United Kingdom £	60.00	56.99
USA \$	1.732	1.589

Rates for small denomination banknotes only as supplied by Barclays Bank. Different rates apply to interbank cheques. Rates at close of trading yesterday.

Rhodia on brink of £455m A&W victory

By CARL MORTISHED, INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS EDITOR

THE battle for Albright & Wilson appeared to be all but over yesterday when Rhodia, the French chemicals company, trumped a US bid for the phosphates group with a £455 million cash offer.

Rhodia has secured the support of Phillips & Drew Fund Management for its 145p-a-share offer, an 11 per cent premium to the 130p bid from Albemarle, announced earlier this month. PDMF has committed its 23 per cent stake to Rhodia unless a third party offers to pay more than 160p for its shares.

Analysts were sceptical that a higher offer would be forthcoming. Michael

Eastwood, of Dresdner Kleinwort Benson, said: "I think it is over." He pointed to the synergy benefits available to Rhodia which already has large phosphate interests. Albemarle is set to make a profit on the 18 per cent stake it has built up.

Rhodia's bid is being made through an off-balance-sheet vehicle, ISPAG, which is wholly owned by Donau Chemie, an Austrian company formerly controlled by Rhodia. It is designed to keep the cost of the bid off the balance sheet of Rhone-Poulenc. Rhodia's 60 per cent shareholder, Rhone-Poulenc is currently in difficult merger discussions with Hoechst.

Peer buys Mirror's old HQ for £40m

By RAYMOND SNOODY, MEDIA EDITOR

LORD Hamlyn of Edgeworth, the Labour-supporting publishing millionaire, has bought the former stamping ground of another of Labour's print tycoons, the late Robert Maxwell.

The Mirror Group, which is now based in the London Docklands, yesterday said that it had sold its old headquarters in the centre of the capital at Holborn, for £40 million.

A private company of Lord Hamlyn, 73, a former director of Reed International, in league with Chelsfield, the property group headed by Elliott Bernard, has bought the site for £31 million in cash. They are also taking on £9 million of debt.

Detailed planning permission already exists for a new glass and steel building on the site designed by Sir Norman Foster & Partners.

The lettable area is about 320,000 sq ft and the building will provide a new headquarters for Andersen Consulting.

The new building, which is expected to cost about £135 million, is scheduled to be completed by March 2001.

The Mirror, which is currently under offer from two hostile bidders, is seeking to reduce debts and slim down to its core interests of national and regional newspapers.

Capital in second casino write-down

By JASON NISSE

CAPITAL CORPORATION, the troubled gaming company, yesterday wrote down the value of one of its casinos and came under pressure to write down the values of its other two.

The group blamed the increase in gaming levy, made in the Budget last year, for a £2.5 million write-down in the value of the Cromwell Mint, the Kensington casino it bought two years ago for £22 million. This is the second write-down made by Capital since it bought Cromwell and cuts the carrying value to £18.2 million.

Analysts queried why the group had not also written down the value of its other two casinos, Crook's and the Colony Club. Capital admitted that the clubs had been independently revalued this year.

The company declined to comment on revelations in The Times that its auditor, Deloitte & Touche, is being investigated by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of England & Wales over its work on Capital's accounts.

The combination of the Cromwell write-down, the increased gaming levy and an absence of high-rolling gamblers led to a fall in pre-tax profits from £12.4 million to £15.4 million in 1998. Earnings fell from 7.86p to 1.64p. A final dividend of 2.8p makes a total of 3p (5.125p) for the year.

De La Rue jobs go as demand slows

ABOUT 130 jobs in Britain are to be axed in a widespread restructuring at De La Rue, the banknote printing group. The company is shedding 500 jobs worldwide at its cash systems division, which designs and makes hole-in-the-wall machines and other cash-counting devices. The British jobs will be lost in Portsmouth, where the group is merging its two operations on to one site. The poorly performing division has been hit by slowing foreign demand.

Ian Muir, chief executive, yesterday pledged that the move was the group's last big restructuring. Last year De La Rue announced 375 job losses in its main banknote-printing plant in Gateshead. Its cash-handling systems division currently accounts for about 40 per cent of group turnover. The total restructuring bill is to come to about £43.9 million, with a total cash cost of £30 million. De La Rue shares rose 7.6p to 21.76p.

Charter flags disposal

FURTHER restructuring lies ahead for Charter, the engineering business whose shares have halved to 38p from 77p over the past 12 months. Announcing a 3.6 per cent slide in underlying pre-tax profit to £85.1 million for 1998, the company said it wants to sell its specialised engineering business, which contributed operating profits of £28.9 million last year. Charter is holding the total dividend at 31.5p, with an unchanged final of 22p, despite a 2.8p fall in underlying earnings to 57.6p a share.

Coke bottler in red

Coca-Cola Beverages, the bottling company, said it was over the worst of the downturn in Eastern Europe as it returned a £15.5 million loss for 1998 (£24.1 million profit). It took a £10.3 million charge for hyper-inflation, £84.3 million for depreciation of equipment and £14.2 million for a factory closure. Underlying profit fell to 0.1p (1.5p earnings) per share. There is no dividend. The shares, floated eight months ago, fell 2.6p to a low of 89p.

Chadburn agrees bid

THE board of Porter Chadburn, the label manufacturer, has agreed to a £46.6 million takeover offer from Mail-Well, the US-based printing company. The bid, at 38p per share, represents a premium of 66 per cent of the closing price of Porter shares before yesterday's announcement. Although based in London, over 70 per cent of Porter's sales are in the US. The purchase is aimed at expanding Mail-Well's range of labels in North America.

Dickins's new label

ROB DICKINS, the millionaire music executive who discovered The Corrs and helped to relaunch Cher's career with *Believe*, her bestselling single, yesterday formed a joint venture record label with Sony Music called Instant Karma Records. Dickins, 48, who left his job last year as chairman of Warner Music in the UK — after a clash with his US bosses — turned down a more lucrative label deal with his former employers to work with Sony.

B&B launches defence

BRADFORD & BINGLEY yesterday launched a £5 million campaign in defence of its mutual status, after a resolution to convert the building society into a bank was tabled last year by self-confessed carpetbagger Stephen Major, supported by 70 other members. The society has sent out voting packs to its 2.5 million members, who must complete and return the forms by April 23 or attend the annual meeting on April 26.

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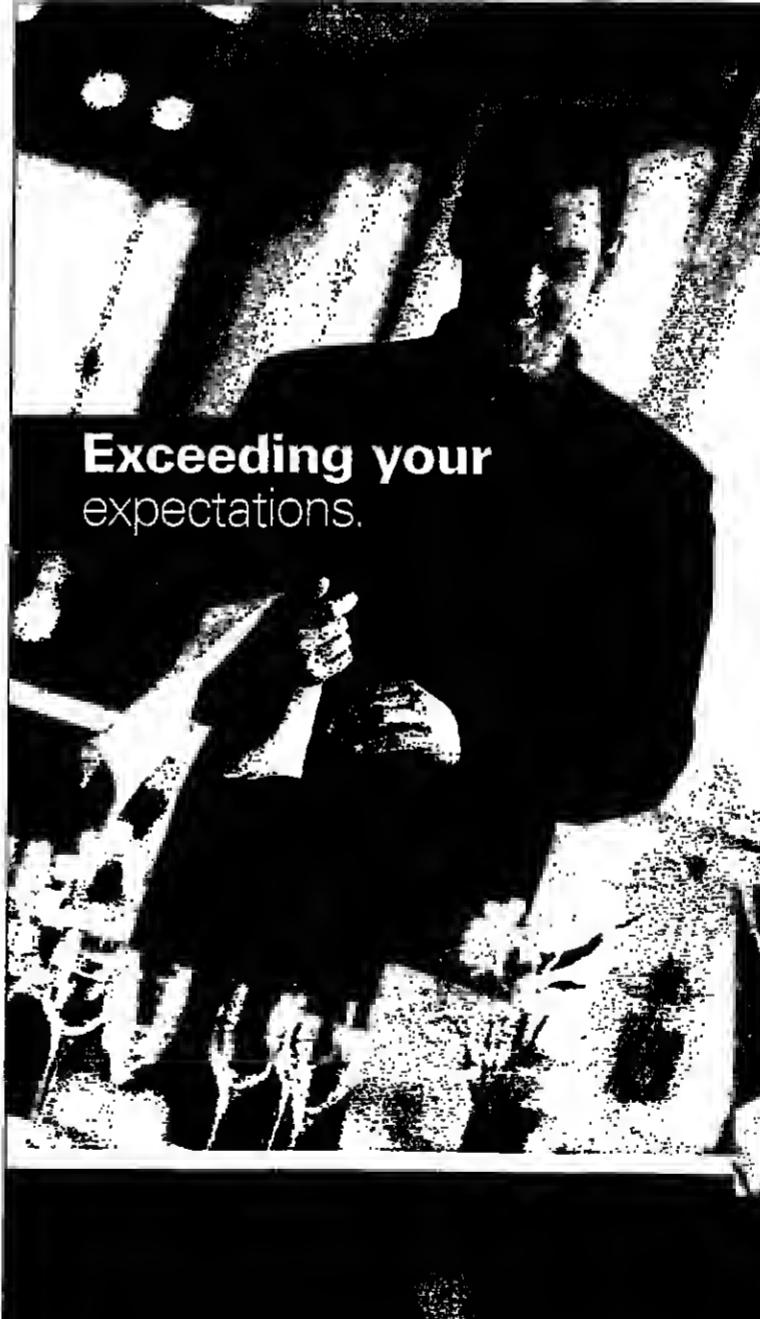
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Wall Street traders indulged in a bout of irrational exuberance as the Dow Jones index broke through 10,000 for the first time.

Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan was probably not joining in the cheering. It was over two years ago that he warned of the dangers of the stock market over-heating, coining the phrase which will now be permanently appended to his name. Just as Jim Callaghan has never been able to throw off the image of him cheerfully remarking "Crisis? What crisis?" as the emergency squad from the IMF headed to Britain, Greenspan's hang-dog visage will always be seen mouthing a warning against the market's "irrational exuberance".

Yet when he first started to voice his concern, the Dow stood at just 6,400. Some investors were not paying attention. Since it started this bull run four years ago, the US index has grown by 160 per cent. Faced with such defiance, Mr Greenspan has become more muted in his qualms but, if he felt uneasy in 1997, there is every reason why he should feel even more so now.

The levels of US share prices are as sustainable as yoghurt flying. The performance of corporate America does not justify price levels which see even non-Internet stocks selling at 40 times earnings and yields which barely register on the payout scale. Mr Greenspan does not want to be seen as a scaremonger but he did mention

in his evidence to the Senate Banking Committee last month that "Equity prices are high enough to raise questions about whether shares are overvalued."

Mr Greenspan is obviously not convinced that we have entered that wonderful world of the new paradigm in which the old rules do not apply. He is suspicious about the dawning of a new age, free of booms and busts, where markets head ever upwards, and we all join hands in a virtuous circle of increased investment, higher productivity, higher wages and increased asset prices.

The chairman of the Fed is a realist not an idealist. America has a huge market of its own but it cannot remain immune from what goes on in the rest of the world. The Asian crisis may have bottomed but the climb out of depression will take several years. The Latin American mess is far from settled. In the meantime, these countries have excess supply and promise intense competition. Corporate profit in the US will show the strain and it is by no means certain that investors will shrug their shoulders and say that they are there for the long term. So far, US savers have demonstrated remarkably strong nerves but they are stretched taut now. Some may

see the magical 10,000 as the point at which to take their hands off and run for cover.

When that happens, London will feel the chill. The FTSE has been pulled along in the wake of the Dow and will not be able to resist the tug when it heads in the opposite direction. Optimists maintain that the weight of money looking for a home will ensure both markets remain strong. But they said the same about Japan.

EU agenda slips its 2000 deadline

The plan is not working. German ministers should have begun trolling round the EU yesterday to drum up support for Agenda 2000, the package of budgetary and voting reform to prepare the way for the next lot of entrants. Instead, having introduced each other to their new Finance Minister, they were scurrying around wondering what you do when the entire Commission resigns.

Echoes of irrational exuberance

COMMENTARY by our City Editor

new budgetary system by then look slim. So the whole muddle will have to be handed on to the Finnish presidency and a "new" Commission, if there is one.

Those waiting to enter the EU for the new millennium may be knocking on the door until their knuckles are sore.

End of the track for Nissan

Nissan should not rely on Gallic generosity either. France invented the "yellow peril" scare a century ago, and the French motor industry has been Japan's biggest enemy in Europe. A link with Renault would be no more than unconditional surrender for Japan's indebted number two motor manufacturer. This is an example of defeat rather than consolidation in the global motor industry.

For Renault, perhaps this was the only way to become a global player. European firms have learned the hard way that mergers with French companies are always takeovers. Renault was an even less desirable partner than Peugeot-Citroen because the French Government still controls Renault, making any partner an outpost of the French State. That

is why Volvo shareholders threw out a merger with Renault but accepted a takeover by Ford.

Nissan has even had to accept the French way of business. Renault will take full control through a minority share stake, maximising its power for the minimum equity capital. Both debt and excess capacity plague Nissan. That immediately raises fears over the Japanese company's pioneering plant in Sunderland. For Renault, it should have no future. Logically, European production should eventually be consolidated in France.

Fortunately, Sunderland is the most efficient car plant in the UK and probably the best in Europe. It should be the conduit to transfer modern manufacturing methods to France. But don't count beyond five years.

Carpet tax

THE Bradford & Bingley Building Society showed it was not afraid of change when it dropped Mr Bradford and Mr Bingley from its corporate identity. But the board is desperate that the B&B should remain a mutual and not surrender to carpet-baggers, and it is spending £5 million to encourage its members to agree. The principle of directors spending shareholders' money to persuade them that the board knows best is not new. Yet the rebranding exercise cost just £10 million. Clearly the B&B feels its members will take some persuading to forgo the windfalls.

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Bodycote shares fall on warning

BY PAUL ARMSTRONG

SHARES of Bodycote International fell more than 10 per cent to 890p yesterday even though the metal processing group announced a 49 per cent jump in 1998 pre-tax profits to £76.2 million.

The shares were adversely affected by the company's warning that the slowdown experienced in its Scandinavian and US operations towards the end of last year was continuing. It said that this was an indirect result of the Asian economic crisis.

Analysts said that some unrealistic earnings expectations and a bout of profit-taking were also to blame for the fall. The shares peaked at £12.82 in May 1998.

John Chesworth, chief executive, said acquisitions had provided almost two thirds of the profit increase, although organic growth levels were still strong. However, he said that Bodycote would be unable to find sufficient purchases this year to repeat that growth rate.

The company spent £77 million on acquisitions last year,

Computer reseller 37% ahead

BY CHRIS AYRES

COMPUTACENTER, the computer reseller and services group whose shares failed to recover from the IT sector crash last summer, yesterday reported some of the damage by reporting a 37 per cent rise in pre-tax profits for 1998 to £64.6 million.

The company, which supplies computer systems to large corporations, reported a 40 per cent rise in sales to £1.6 billion. However, net margins slipped from 4.6 per cent to 4.2 per cent.

The results saw shares in the company rise 23.5p to 523.5p. However, they remain well below the company's flotation price of 670p.

Computacenter will pay a maiden final dividend of 2.5p a share, up from 2p on May 21. Philip Hulme, the Computacenter chairman, said that prospects for the group in 1999 "remained strong".

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Telewest doubles earnings

BY RAYMOND SNODDY

TELEWEST, the UK's largest cable television supplier by number of subscribers, reported a near doubling in earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation to £146 million for 1998.

For the year, Telewest, enlarged by the purchase of General Cable and the merging up of Birmingham Cable, increased revenues by 39.5 per cent to £539.2 million.

"The results reflect our focus on customer sales, service and marketing," said Tony Illsley, chief executive, who joined Telewest last year from Walkers Crisps.

The emphasis on marketing at Telewest was underlined yesterday by the appointment of 32-year-old Philip Jansen as group marketing director.

The enlarged company made a pre-forma net loss of £241 million against £430 million in 1997.

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Kalon maintains payout despite slip

KALON GROUP, the UK paints company that is considering a £500 million bid approach by Total, the French oil company, is maintaining the total dividend for 1998 despite a fall in pre-tax profits to £37 million from £45.2 million (Martin Barron writes).

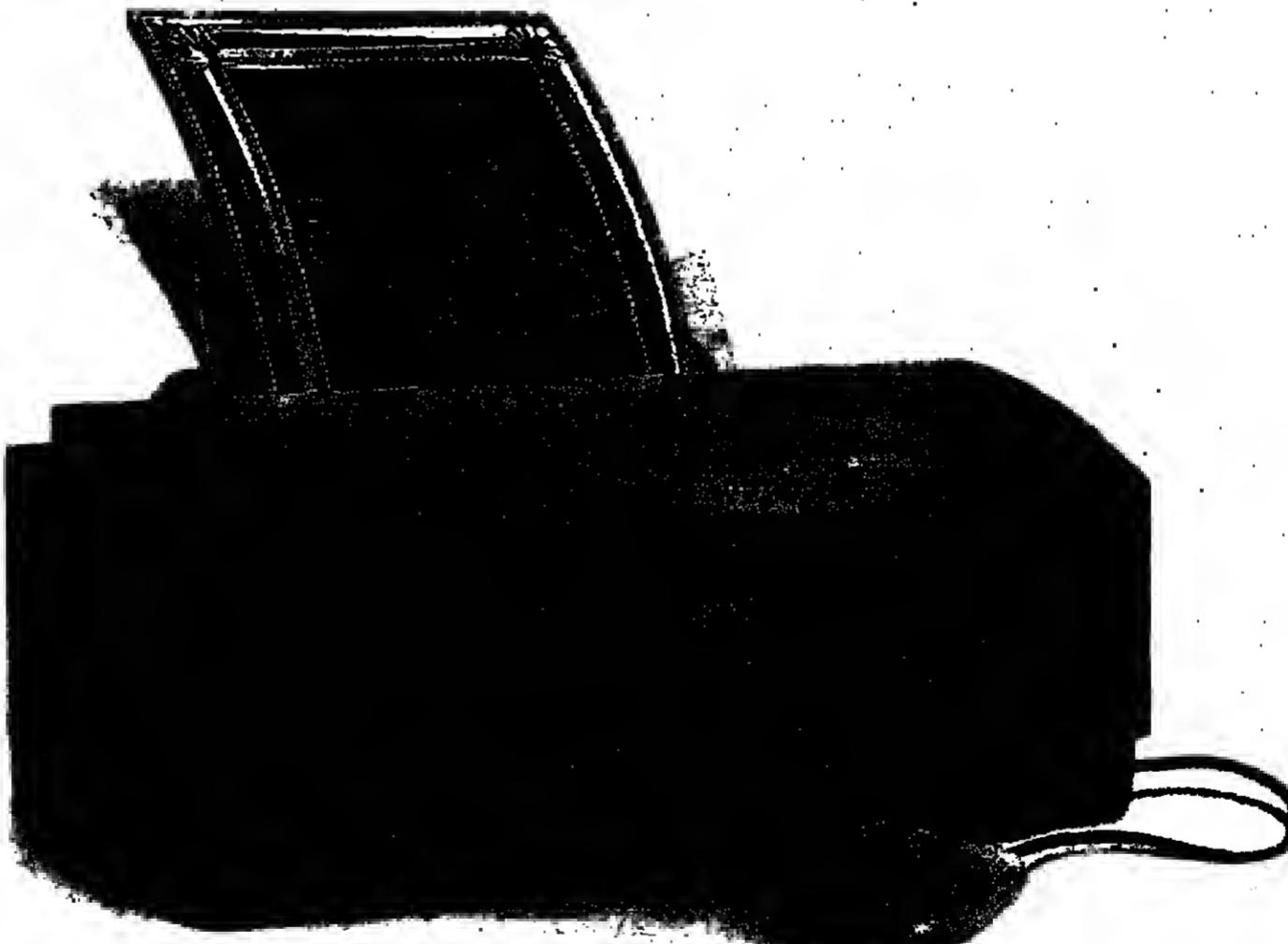
The fall was blamed on competition in the market for paints and coatings, aggravated by the strength of the pound. Turnover was little changed at

£674.3 million, compared with £672 million in 1997. The dividend stays at 6.2p.

Mike Hennessy, Kalon's managing director, said: "During the year we experienced increasingly difficult market conditions. However, we still managed to produce margins that were considerably better than those of European competitors."

Total already holds a 63 per cent interest in Kalon.

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STOCK MARKET



FRASER NELSON

JJB jumps on talk of a management buyout

SHARES of JJB Sports enjoyed one of their sharpest one-day rises yesterday amid rumours that David Whelan, founder and chairman, is planning to take the sports chain private.

The shares jumped 9.4 per cent to an eight-month high of 425p on word that JJB's management — which already owns 51.4 per cent of the company — is trying to raise the money to buy the rest.

However, David Greenwood, JJB's finance director, categorically denied the rumours as "absolute nonsense". City retail analysts agreed saying JJB could not take on more debt while still digesting its ill-timed acquisition of rival Sports Direct.

One said: "The shares are being moved by good, old-fashioned stock shortage — so this bizarre rumour is being fed into a very tight market."

Other dealers said that the shares were still almost half last year's 820p high, which makes it vulnerable to a takeover.

All this added up a share rise which made JJB London's best-performing share among larger stocks, as blue chips were sidelined by disappointment that the Dow Jones industrial average had only managed to ope above the 10,000 threshold before profit-taking set in. The FTSE 100 ended 4.9 points lower at 6,201.9.

COLT Telecom led a resurgence among the telecoms stocks, which overcame much of the ground lost when Veba sold its 10.2 per cent stake in Cable & Wireless on Monday.

COLT was the best performer in the FTSE 100, up 6 per cent to 995.6p. Among second-line telecom stocks, Fibernet was 114p stronger at 459p, and Energis 25p better at 614.85. Cable & Wireless itself gave up earlier gains to close 5p down at 750.5p.

The £455 million bid for Allbright & Wilson, 10.9 per cent at 148p, by Rhodia of France led dealers to wonder where Albermarle of the US — which has been left at the altar with its £408 million bid — may look next.

Yule Catto was one suspect, 16p better at 305p. Other targets mentioned were Seacapa, 2p lighter at 113p. Mecano was 24p stronger at 120p as directors spent £52,200 buying shares at 120p.

Pson added another 8.7 per cent to 935p on City approval



Richard Marton, chief executive of Britax International, up 8p to 140.4p on the back of strong preliminary results

of the deal between its Symbian associates and NTT of Japan.

Britax International was a strong riser, up 8p to 140.4p on strong preliminary results.

Game, the recently floated computer games retailer whose shares have never bettered their 230p issue price, has revived thanks to a bid approach from rival **Electronics**

Boutique. It was 4.4p better at 134.4p. Word in the City, however, is that the deal could soon be off. **Electronics** Boutique's institutional investors, the story goes, have told the company that it should save its cash to buy large edge-of-town shopping sites or snap up its European counterparts.

Electronics **Boutique**

Electronics **Boutique** has fallen 15 per cent since talks were announced but finished all square at 77.4p yesterday. Dealers believe that if it walks, Game shares will fall sharply and EB will recover.

Meanwhile, there are whispers that **Gremlin Group**, off 1p at 133.4p, is looking at a 130p-a-share offer from Eidos, 15p better at 151.40. **Gremlin** said in January that it had been approached.

First Choice, which has agreed to an all-share merger with **Kuoni**, was off another 1p to 161p. In Zurich, **Kuoni**'s shares have fallen 10 per cent since it announced the deal.

This decreases the value of the bid, and many UK punters are selling rather than wait for the new London-listed **Kuoni Holdings** to be created.

UK Land, which owns the Elephant and Castle shopping centre in South London, continued its dazzling rise, adding 11p to 118.4p — making a 48 per cent rise on the week. This was traced back to the decision by the London Borough of Lambeth's decision to redevelop the 170-acre site.

The Elephant & Castle site has a book value of £17.5 million. Even after yesterday's rise, **UK Land** is capitalised at £10.6 million. Dealers think any deal would push its shares further into orbit.

Neville Buch, the former chairman of exhibitions group Blenheim, was moving markets again today on whispers that he is about to activate **Somic**, a shell company in which he has a 17.2 per cent stake. Its shares jumped 32 per cent to 105p, or word that he will reverse another company into **Somic** in the next few weeks.

On the Alternative Investment Market, dealers were stocking up on **Datromech** — a penny better at 20p — on hopes that it finalises later this month will show much better results than expected.

GILT-EDGE GIL Gilt ended with solid gains in light trading. Longs outperformed shorts as Treasury 8 per cent 2003 advanced 6p to 112.34, while Treasury 8 per cent 2015 jumped 76p to 138.84.

NEW YORK The Dow Jones industrial average topped the 10,000 level for the first time in early trading before profit-taking wiped out most of the gains. At midday it was up 8.8 points to 9,967.65.

Water companies were always expected to lose their appeal as safety stocks, but few expected them to lose a quarter of their value.

Where will this alarming decline end? There was certainly no respite yesterday, with only two risers among the 22 quoted water companies have suffered.

Severn Trent is now 27 per cent off its peak. **Thames Water** has fallen 23 per cent and **Anglian Water** is down 26 per cent.

Their charge: being boring, predictable companies in a market suddenly full of excitement.

They were ideal for shelter when the rest of the market was in turmoil, but are no fun now things have

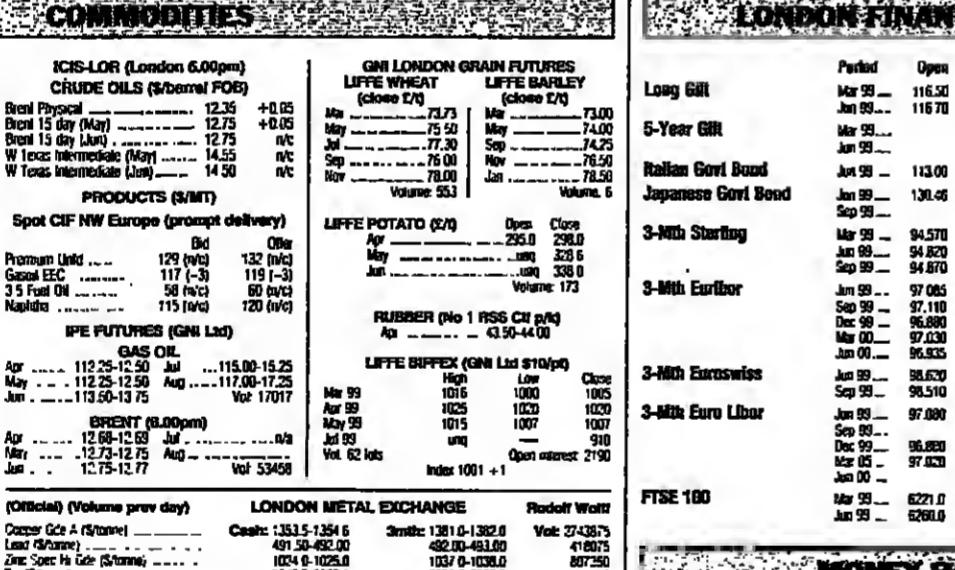
picked up again. The water companies were always expected to lose their appeal as safety stocks, but few expected them to lose a quarter of their value.

Where will this alarming decline end? There was certainly no respite yesterday, with only two risers among the 22 quoted water companies have suffered.

Water managers say this money is now chasing the bombed-out engineering sector and other long-neglected cyclical companies. The worst is not over yet.

Construction was a suspect, 16p better at 305p. Other targets mentioned were **Seacapa**, 2p lighter at 113p. **Mecano** was 24p stronger at 120p as directors spent £52,200 buying shares at 120p.

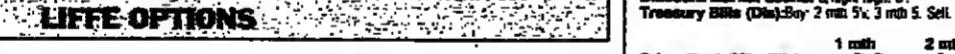
Pson added another 8.7 per cent to 935p on City approval



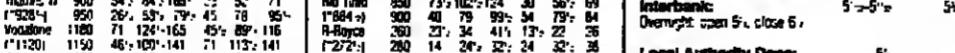
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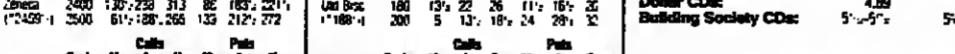
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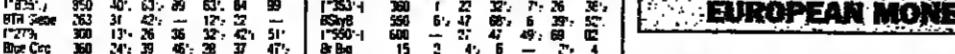
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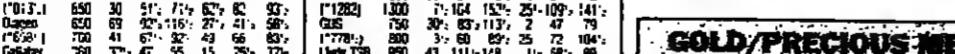
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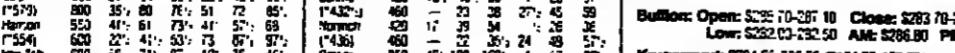
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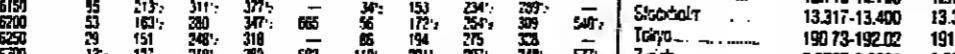
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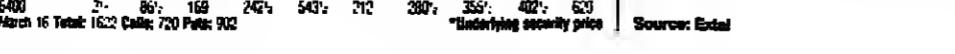
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Developers of the £1.2 billion Bluewater project say that its location in Kent is justified by its ability to entice shoppers from far and wide. However, they have what amounts to a partial back-up plan should their forecasts of commuting customers prove a little ambitious.

The investors, led by the Australian property group Lend Lease, are in the throes of ensuring that at least 30,000 potential shoppers take up residence in the 10,000 houses they plan to build on the edge of their retailing colossus in Dartford.

Lend Lease insists that its extensive, although little-talked-about, residential plan is a stand-alone project and is in no way designed to support Bluewater's economics. The forecast number of shoppers at Bluewater, it says, does not in-

clude a "single soul" from its emerging city.

This means that the nearby residents could be seen as significant icing on the cake for a complex which, according to its owners, already boasts robust economics. In fact, it could not be seen any other way.

However, Lend Lease is eyeing a much bigger prize than a few extra customers at Bluewater. The developer believes that it will "generate a few million of profit each year and rising" by developing residential, office and light industrial complexes on the land surrounding its retail display.

Blue Circle has agreed to a joint venture with Lend Lease that will enable development of the 2,000 acres it holds around the shopping complex. Blue Circle contributes the expertise and working capital. The pair do not plan to introduce other investors, as has been done at Bluewater.

Stuart Horner, chairman of Lend Lease, says that the idea emerged from the company's continuing "cities of the future" research, which identified areas east of Lon-

don as strategically important European regions in coming years. "We thought it was obvious, but when we asked around it was perceived by London Inc as being very brownfield," Mr Horner said.

However, he says that this view overlooked the fact that Ebbsfleet, which is part of the Blue Circle land, has the only railway station on the planned fast link to the Channel Tunnel. Its attractiveness could be enhanced further if the link was extended to St Pancras.

Blue Circle has eight million sq ft of land around the station that has been approved for residential and retail development, although planning is in the early stages. In the meantime, the joint venture has started building the first of 500 houses, costing £200,000 each, at the Stone Castle site immediately adjacent to Bluewater. Campus-style office parks are also planned for this area.

A third site, Crossways, will consist mainly of offices and warehouses in an attempt to capitalise on the region's perceived strategic advantage as a distribution point.

In keeping with Lend Lease practice, the buildings will be sold soon after they are leased. It is also the company's policy not to disclose its financial returns from individual projects.

"We want to see if we can create a new environment where we mix office and residential more closely," Mr Horner said. "We know that from the middle of 1995 to 2015, 4.4 million new houses are needed in Britain and basically there is no land."

"There are few locations like this. We have big demand working for us. There is no risk attached to it at all. There might be a bit of experimental housing but the bulk of it will be stuff you will see everywhere."

Why didn't someone think of it before?

Developers home in on shoppers

Paul Armstrong analyses the plans for Bluewater

Britain's defiant truckers haul up their flag of convenience

UK hauliers are ready to flee fuel and road tax costs by moving overseas, writes Adam Jones

Britain's truckers are contemplating life overseas. The high cost of diesel and road tax has long left them vulnerable to cheaper foreign competition and further increases announced in Gordon Brown's Budget last week have sparked a rebellion.

Backed by their trade associations — and with a sympathetic campaign in *The Sun* newspaper — trucking firms are threatening to set up businesses in other European Union countries and then "commute" back into Britain, continuing to serve their customers but denying the UK Treasury any tax benefit to offset the damage they cause to our roads and air.

The process is called "flagging out", a term more commonly applied to ships. But just how bad is the plight of the UK trucker and how serious is the threat to go overseas?

There is no doubt that fuel and road tax is much more expensive in the UK than elsewhere in the European Union. A litre of diesel costs about 71.2p in the UK. In France, it would be about 45p. In Spain, 41p.

It is imperative that UK hauliers taking loads to France leave with a minimum of fuel so they can fill up on the other side of the Channel — and they must also fill up before returning in the hope of making a reasonable profit.

The most commonly quoted comparison for vehicle excise duty — or "tonnage tax" — is for a 40-tonne lorry with five axles, which the industry says is Europe's standard big truck.

The Budget increased the tax on this vehicle from £3,210 to £5,750 in the UK. This compares with £291 in Portugal, £338 in Luxembourg, £459 in France and £1,751 in Germany, according to the Freight Transport Association, a trade body that represents truckers.

The increases in the Budget were no surprise, however. The Labour Government had pledged to increase road fuel tax rates by an annual average of 6 per cent above the rate of inflation. This continued an "escalator" arrangement introduced by the Conservatives in 1993 at the slightly lower level of 5 per cent.

Steven Norris was the transport minister then. Bizarrely, Mr Norris, now out of office, is campaigning against the rolling fuel tax rises as head of the Road Haulage Association, another trade body.

He denies that his members are suffering at the hands of a



Hard shoulder in the face of growing foreign competition, Eddie Stobart is threatening to register half of his 800-strong haulage fleet in Luxembourg

SPOTTING EDDIE STOBART IN LUXEMBOURG

FEW trends in modern business can be more baffling than the mythology that has sprung up around Eddie Stobart, the Carlisle haulage firm that was started in the 1970s (Adam Jones writes).

The company's trucks, which each bear a woman's name, have become motorway celebrities, reportedly after Jools Holland, the musician, said he liked looking out for the lorries.

"Frankenstein's monster" that he helped create. He claims that the Labour Government has abused the system by increasing the annual multiplier. More convincingly, he argues that the tax simply is not working and that vehicles are not being priced off the roads.

The Government did warn last November that it was going to target 40-tonne, five-axle lorries. As a concession, it said 41-tonne lorries with six axles — which spread a load more evenly and therefore less destructively — would be taxed much more lightly. This has been greeted with disdain by the haulage firms, who say 41-tonne trucks are not allowed on roads in continental Europe.

In the meantime, foreign haulage firms are increasing their presence in Britain, by about 100,000 trucks a year — a growth rate of some 14 per cent.

Big players include Norbert Dentressangle of France and Willi Betz of Germany. When they arrive at Dover with tanks full of cheap petrol, they can drive up to 1,500 miles. As of last July, they have freedom to tout for business in the UK.

The increased competition is undoubtedly hurting domestic firms. Pre-tax profit margins at Eddie Stobart, a privately-owned haulier based in Carlisle, were pretty thin at less than five per cent in 1997.

In 1998, with foreign competition mounting, the situation worsened. Profits fell from £3.6 million before tax to about £1.8 million, even though turnover rose from £77 million to more than £100 million — a profit margin of less than 2 per cent.

He is threatening to register half of his 800-strong fleet overseas, possibly in Luxembourg. The drivers would continue to live in the UK and their trucks would also stay here most of the time, returning to their nominal headquarters six

Stobart lorries and another looks out for those of his French arch-enemy, Norbert Dentressangle. Eddie Stobart produces collectable toys and replica driver uniforms. There are several unofficial Internet sites, full of pictures of Stobart lorries, with names such as lorrysighting.com.

They swirl and gossip about the company, such as whether it intended to introduce

"an American-style

Scania tractor unit" (this speculation was found to be true).

The firm was even immortalised in a song by the Wurzels, best known for *Combine Harvester*. It had the following last verse:

"I want to be an Eddie Stobart driver. That's exactly what I want to be. And if I can't be an Eddie Stobart driver I'm going home to burn my HGV."

times a year to satisfy residence regulations.

This is untested ground, though. Donald Armour, the resident flagger-out expert at the Freight Transport Association, reckons the Government could move to stop this kind of survival.

While there has been a wave of interest since the Budget, he thinks flagging out will only really be an option for the largest, who have the scale to deal with the extra legal, account-

ing, insurance and regulatory red tape overseas.

Those firms who do flag out may be tempted to hire foreign workers to replace UK-based staff. This happens in UK shipping, where owners register vessels in dependencies such as the Isle of Man so they can reduce crewing costs and pay national insurance. About two-thirds of the bigger UK cargo and passenger ships are operated from offshore locations.

In 1980, they would all have been based on the mainland.

But haulage firms have to

face the fact that other workers

within the European Union —

— who have the same rights to

drive over here as British na-

tionals — are likely to be more

costly to employ and more likely to be unionised. There are further restrictions on using cheap labour from Eastern Europe.

There will be a stand-off while the industry continues to demand rebates on diesel duty. Then, who knows. The trade bodies say truckers are agitating for more direct action, such as port blockades. If it works for the French, might it not work for them?



New hat former transport minister Steven Norris is now campaigning against fuel tax rises

Terminal 5 decision vital

From the President and members of the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sir, It is with relief that business can finally welcome the end of the Terminal 5 public inquiry — the UK's longest ever.

While it is, of course, right that each side must have its views fully aired, we cannot afford to delay a decision for much longer. We therefore urge the inspector to do all that he can to deliver his report swiftly.

The Terminal 5 decision ultimately affects Britain's global competitiveness and the benefits of a positive decision would be felt by businesses throughout the whole of the UK. Regional airports rely heavily on their links to Heathrow, which, as Europe's premier airport, can offer the huge range and frequency of flights and despatches that

BUSINESS LETTERS

are so important to business. Furthermore, Heathrow generates £3 billion a year in wages, supports 200,000 jobs across the country and is worth nearly £5 billion each year to UK tourism revenue alone.

Other airports, such as Amsterdam Schiphol and Paris Charles de Gaulle, are being actively developed with the specific objective of taking business from Heathrow. If Britain is not to lose out to European competitors, a decision to build Terminal 5 must be made soon.

Yours faithfully,
COLIN PARSONS, President, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry;
ADAIR TURNER, Director General, CBI;
BILL MORRIS, Secretary General, TGWU;
PETER GEORGE, Chairman, Hilton International;
JOSEPH P. MACHALE, Chief

Executive, JP Morgan Securities;
GERALD CORBEIT, Chief Executive, Railtrack;
JIM BUCKLEY, Chief Executive, The Baltic Exchange;
33 Queen Street, London, EC4R 1AP.

From Mr Dermot Cox and Mr Nic Ferriday
Sir, On Wednesday the Terminal 5 public inquiry comes to an end after nearly four years. The length of the inquiry is partly a reflection of the determination of ordinary people across London and the Thames Valley and their democratic representatives to ensure that the proposed massive expansion of Heathrow shall be rejected.

We are very optimistic that the inspector will reach this conclusion when he finishes his report in two years' time. However, there is considerable anxiety among local people

that the Government may succumb to lobbying pressure from the air transport industry to overturn an inspector's recommendation to refuse permission for Terminal 5.

We are calling on John Prescott, Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, to make a commitment now that the Government will implement the recommendations of the inquiry.

While Mr Prescott has for moral discretion over the ultimate decision, he cannot understand the issues in the same depth as the inspector and, therefore, be in no position to disregard the final judgement.

Yours faithfully,
DERMOT COX
Chairman,
Heathrow Association for the
Control of Aircraft Noise,
PO Box 339,
Richmond, Surrey,
TW9 3RB.

NIC FERRIDAY,
Spokesman,
Friends of the Earth.

The Index-Tracking PEP

Source: M&G, Legal & General PEP All-Share Index-Tracking PEP is an offer to buy based on all PEP charges with gross income re-invested from 01.11.95 (from launch) to 31.12.98. Past performance is not necessarily a guide to future performance. From 06.04.99 onwards, PEP's dividend distributions will only be able to be reclaimed by PEP at a reduced rate of 10%. Both capital and income values may go down as well as up and you may not get back the amount you invested. Full terms and conditions available on request. All statements are correct as at 01.01.99. The Government have announced that contributions can only be made to PEPs until April 1999. From that date a new tax premium will be levied on the individual pension scheme (IAPS) will be imposed by Legal & General (Direct) Limited. Registered in England no 2702689 Registered Office: Temple Court, 11 Queen Victoria Street, London EC4N 4TP. Representative only of the Legal & General marketing group, a group of companies regulated by the Financial Services Authority and IAPS. Legal & General is not a member of the group. For the purposes of recommending, advising on and selling life assurance and investment products bearing Legal & General's name.

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Legal & General

OLDER City hands will be shocked to learn of the death of Alan Harman, aged 55, once a well-known stockbroker who left the Square Mile in 1974 when Chapman & Rowe, his firm, was hammered on the Stock Exchange after failing to meet its obligations.

Harman

finally settled in

Spain,

where he dealt in

commodities.

He

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City.

Before the secondary banking crisis saw for Chapman & Rowe, Harman had a successful career trading with institutions, and the manner of its ending meant he left behind him in the City a few enemies, I am told. "I think there's a lot of jealousy involved," says his former colleague.

He

Overseas success to fuel Wolseley acquisition spree

By MATTHEW BARBOUR

WOLSELEY, the builder's merchant is to continue its acquisition spree during the second half of the year after a buoyant US market raised first-half profits above market forecasts.

The company said that it expects the US market to remain strong, with British and French markets likely to improve. By contrast, markets were likely to remain difficult for the manufacturing division. However, the company said that overall it expects a "satisfactory" outcome for the full year.

Pre-tax profits for the six months to January 31, 1999, rose 14.2 per cent to £142.5 million (£124.8 million), 5 per cent above top-end City forecasts of £136 million.

Steve Webster, the finance director, said the results were a result of strong sales and profits in the US, which

accounts for more than half of sales as well as a strong European performance.

"The US remains very positive. It is a strong market and there are no signs of softening — all the recent indications on housing starts and building permits are extremely encouraging," he said.

Shares in Wolseley, which last week jumped 75p on the back of data reinforcing strong housing growth in the US and encouraging results from rival building merchant Travis Perkins, rose a further 75p yesterday to 475p. In September the shares hit a low of 276p following a steady decline from 556p before it disappointed the markets with last year's first-half results.

So far this year Wolseley has spent a record £211 million on acquisitions, including Hall & Co in Britain,

Porcher Distribution in France and four US distribution businesses for about £68 million (£42.5 million).

Mr Webster said that the company is aiming to maintain its spending rate "ad infinitum", provided it is presented with sufficient opportunities.

"We have plenty of balance-sheet capacity to take more debt," he said. Over the past 12 months net borrowing has jumped to £219.4 million from £38.1 million, with gearing rising to 21.3 per cent (4 per cent).

Sales during the first half rose 12 per cent to £2.6 billion (£2.3 billion). Earnings per share were 15.0p (15.12p), with an interim dividend of 3.75p (3.5p).

15.0p (15.12p), with an interim dividend of 3.75p (3.5p).

Homes key for Taylor Woodrow

By ROBERT LEA

THE new chief executive of Taylor Woodrow emphasised the group's conversion into a focused Anglo-US housebuilder when he indicated yesterday that large international construction projects are becoming too risky.

Keith Egerton said: "We are clearly an international housing and property group supported by construction and trading businesses. We are more comfortable with the risk in housing and property."

Mr Egerton said that turnover from the construction arm, which now accounts for just 6 per cent of profits, will decline.

The new focus could also see the sale of its merchanting business, Greenham Trading, possibly for as much as £100 million.

The group yesterday revealed pre-tax profits for 1998, leaping 22 per cent to £100.3 million on the back of a 73 per cent profit rise from its booming housing operations in the US to £26 million. In the UK, Taywood Homes last year lifted operating margins to 10 per cent from 8.1 per cent. The company is paying a final dividend of 3.6p, making 5.1p for the year, up 13 per cent.



Peter Kindersley says now is an ideal time to expand curriculum-based educational material

Education division for DK

DORLING KINDERSLEY,

the multimedia publisher, is to launch a new education division and turn its website into a virtual bookshop (Raymond Snoddy writes).

Peter Kindersley, the executive chairman, unveiled the initiatives yesterday as the company announced a 16.3 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £4.7 million on turnover down

4.2 per cent to £27.4 million in the six months to December 31. The interim dividend is unchanged at 1.5p.

Parents' fears about "a failed education system" provided the ideal environment for DK to expand curriculum-based educational material. Mr Kindersley said: "The new division will bring together both electronic and paper-based

publishing and develop the concept of computer tutors."

DK is also about to relaunch its website to sell direct to customers via the Internet. The site will provide the electronic equivalent of taking a book off the shelf to browse the contents, and "virtual assistants" will know about a customer's previous purchases to make buying suggestions.

Doulton investors to decide

By SARAH CUNNINGHAM

SHAREHOLDERS and directors of Royal Doulton, the troubled china group, are to decide whether a new chief executive is to be appointed following the withdrawal from the job of Patrick Wengen, who was involved in a serious accident at the end of last year.

The company is currently being run by Hamish Grossart, the company doctor who was brought in as chairman and asked to turn the business round. He oversaw the decision last year to make more than 1,200 staff redundant.

He revealed yesterday that the group's restructuring had left it with a pre-tax loss of £42.6 million for calendar 1998, from a profit of £6.2 million a year earlier. The loss per share was 78.97p (6.92p earnings). There is no final dividend.

Mr Grossart said he will consult shareholders and directors over the next few weeks and, if asked, would run the company for the next 12 to 18 months.

Morgan Crucible in disposal to US

MORGAN CRUCIBLE, the diversified industrial company, expects to raise £136.8 million from the sale of its maintenance, repair and overhaul business to America's Illinois Tool Works, announced yesterday. The company also said it would seek authority to buy back up to 14.99 per cent of its shares.

Morgan Crucible shares rose 12.5p to 29p, helped by the company's statement that its 1998 profits would be towards the higher end of the range indicated in January's profits warning. Shareholders were told that profits before tax and exceptional items would be between 15 per cent and 20 per cent below those of the previous year. However, the company cautioned that proceeds from the sale of assets would not be sufficient to cover goodwill previously written off, and that the results would show an exceptional charge of £57 million as a result.

Britax ahead 15%

BRITAX INTERNATIONAL, the automotive engineering and aircraft interiors company, lifted underlying pre-tax profits 15.2 per cent to £52.3 million in 1998. Adjusted earnings per share rose 15.3 per cent to 10.25p. Britax also raised £48.4 million after tax from the disposal of its two leasing businesses. The total dividend rises 7.5 per cent to 4.19p, with a second interim dividend of 3.275p. Britax said it had identified a number of targeted bolt-on acquisitions that could be funded through strong cash generation.

Brammer blow

PROFITS at Brammer, the industrial services group, fell to £23.9 million before tax from £30.5 million in 1998. This reflected a disappointing performance in the UK, where business was adversely affected by the impact of the strong pound on exporting and manufacturing companies that make use of Brammer's services. Earnings per share fell to 35.2p from 45.8p. However, the total dividend rises to 17.8p from 17.2p, with a final 11.8p. Brammer said the outlook was still uncertain for UK businesses although there were signs that the rate of decline may be easing.

Headlam's Eclipse bid

HEADLAM GROUP, the floorcoverings and fabrics distributor, has launched a recommended £52.4 million takeover bid for Eclipse Blinds. The offer, which has received acceptances in respect of 29 per cent of Eclipse, is of 20 new Headlam shares for 61 Eclipse shares, valuing each Eclipse share at 113.6p, against Monday's closing price of 97.4p. Headlam also reported a rise in 1998 pre-tax profits to £22.9 million from £18.1 million. Eclipse reported annual pre-tax profits little changed at £6.52 million, compared with £6.3 million in 1997.

Slow start for Finlay

JAMES FINLAY, the plantation and speciality teas company, said it had made a disappointing start to 1999, with relatively weak tea prices. However, dry weather in Kenya, North India and Bangladesh suggested that prices would improve this year as a result of a reduction in crops. The company was reporting a rise in 1998 pre-tax profits to £16.2 million from £13.9 million, with a rise in earnings per share to 10.5p from 10.2p. The total dividend is increased to 5p from 4.15p, with a second interim dividend of 3p.

Cortecs £1m charge

CORTECS, the troubled biotechnology company whose chairman is Lord Patten, will take a second-half charge of £1 million to cover the cost of streamlining its activities after the disclosure last December that two of its three lead drug programmes had failed to make adequate progress. Yesterday the company reported an increase in first-half losses to £11.5 million from £9.1 million. The loss per share was 1.2p, compared with a 5.5p loss last time. The shares, which peaked at 418p in 1996, traded at 24p yesterday.

Prestbury in the black

PRESTBURY GROUP, the property investment company where Nick Leslau is chairman and chief executive, returned to profit in 1998, earning £3.7 million before tax compared with a loss of £900,000 in 1997. Earnings were 0.05p a share, against a 0.3p loss in the previous year. There is again no dividend but the company has promised a "modest" dividend for 1999. Net asset value was 2.75p a share at the year end, up from 1.38p at the end of 1997. Yesterday the shares, which trade on the Alternative Investment Market, were unchanged at 34p.

Secure Trust up 7%

SECURE TRUST, the private banking group, lifted pre-tax profits 7 per cent to £11.4 million in 1998, with a 5 per cent rise in earnings to 52.3p a share. The total dividend rises 57 per cent to 36p a share, with a 10p special dividend paid in November, and a final dividend of 18p. The shares rose 17.5p to 580p yesterday. The company's two divisions comprise Arbutnott Latham, the private and merchant bank, and Secure Trust Bank, a provider of household cash management services.

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THE TIMES UNIT TRUST INFORMATION SERVICE

Equities shed early gains

TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

1998/99	Price	Yld	PE			
High	Low	Close	Chg	% Chg	PE	
ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES						
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447 356 Bass Breweries	319	-	15	52	123	
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THE TIMES WEDNESDAY MARCH 17 1999

From Beijing to Tokyo and Dublin to New York, St Patrick's Day celebrations circle the world, says Eve-Ann Prentice

Eddie Jordan, the Irish stalwart and Formula One chieftain, will be living proof today of the Guinness adage that not everything in black and white makes sense.

While his compatriots do their strenuous best to celebrate St Patrick's Day in the time-honoured fashion, downing more than a million pints of the 'black stuff' by closing time in the UK alone, Jordan will be putting his foot down hard — on a bicycle pedal. For some, the image may conjure Guinness's advert portraying a fish on a bicycle.

The motor racing supremo will push himself to the limit at the start of a 250-mile sponsored cycle ride from Petrol in Jordan to Eliat in Israel to raise funds for a children's charity.

Just over a week after seeing his driver, Heinz-Harald Frentzen, sprayed with champagne for coming second in the opening Grand Prix of the season in Australia, Jordan is spending St Patrick's Day as possibly the driest Irishman on the planet.

But even if Jordan does not manage a pint of Guinness today, revellers in Britain and around the world will be raising a glass to honour our Ireland's patron saint (who never tasted a drop in his lifetime). A cool 45 pints of the stuff will be served every second that the UK's 72,000 bars are open today and one in six of the bars will hold a St Patrick's Day party.

In Ireland and America St Patrick's Day revellers have been getting in the party mood since the weekend. On Saturday the Chicago River began turning even greener

The green party wins worldwide

than usual as city workers dumped vegetable dye from the stern of a power boat, while Ireland began ushering in the year 2000 with a dazzling fireworks display watched by more than 100,000 people.

One of the largest crowds yet seen on the banks of the Liffey for the glittering street party, kicking off St Patrick's Day celebrations and nine months of festivities leading to the millennium. It is the first official event in the world to herald the year 2000.

Jim McDaid, Ireland's Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation, says: "Tonight is the night that we show the world that the Irish know how to celebrate."

The national airline Aer Lingus spent £400,000 sponsoring the show, touted as the biggest pyrotechnics display yet staged in Europe.

It was orchestrated by Syd Howard, a 63-year-old Australian and the man behind the fireworks displays which accompanied the handover of Hong Kong and the end of the Atlanta Olympics. About 6.5 tonnes of explosives — 15,000 shells — were shipped in for the show and stored in an Irish Army

base for two weeks beforehand. The spectacle around the majestic Customs House brought the curtain up on five days of revelry across Ireland leading up to the big St Patrick's Day celebrations on the island to date.

More bizarre Irish crazes will take place in Beijing, where the

The Mount Everest Brewery has been licensed to brew Guinness in Nepal — it will be a high point of the day

first St Patrick's Day street party is being held, and in Tokyo, which is hosting a parade to rival the megafestivals in New York and Australia. One place where drinkers are sure to be high is Nepal, where the Mount Everest Brewery has been licensed to brew Guinness and distribute it to Kathmandu's 130 bars

for sale at a heart-warming 55p a bottle.

And the man behind all these festivities? It is hard to separate historical fact from legend in the minds and hearts of the Irish, but one thing is certain — St Patrick did not come from Ireland. He was born to a Romano-British town councillor, probably in Wales or what is now western England, in about 390.

At 16, he was captured by Irish pirates and enslaved by them for six years. After escaping or being freed, he was ordained a bishop and returned to Ireland as a missionary. Intent on eradicating paganism, idolatry and sun-worship (hard though the latter may be to imagine in an island renowned for rain), St Patrick built permanent foundations for the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland.

The Patrick of legend, meanwhile, was a mystical wizard-like being who drove all the serpents out of Ireland and who managed to explain the mysteries of the Holy Trinity with the three-leafed shamrock.

Eddie Jordan's venture in the saddle comes after he swapped life in the fast lane for a ride on the wagon — he has given up alcohol for Lent

following a challenge from his daughter, Miki, 15. Nonetheless, with Irish eyes shining with enthusiasm for St Patrick's Day, he says: "Anyone who has the stupidity to go off drink for Lent knows that you are allowed to get lashed on St Patrick's Day."

There is certainly one St Patrick's Day which he will never forget. In 1991 his team was to race in its first Formula One event in Phoenix, Arizona, on March 17. Shortly beforehand, when the expensive and high-powered world of motor racing had spent a fortune arranging to be there, the city's mayor announced that the big race would have to be held a week early because the roads were being painted green for St Patrick's Day.

Politicians are rarely confused with saints, but the strain of keeping the Irish peace process on course needs the patience of one. Tonight, Bertie Ahern, the Taoiseach, will find a little light relief from the cares of office when he presents Bill Clinton with a basket of shamrock after holding talks in Washington with the other Irish leaders and the American President.

In New York meanwhile, there was one discordant note in the world's St Patrick's Day festivities when six protesters were arrested during the first Bronx St Patrick's Day Parade in 70 years, for trying to join the procession under the banner of a gay rights group. Police said the protesters displayed a banner that read "Lavender and Green Alliance" and rushed on to the street to join the parade a few minutes after it started.



A Little Mr Leprechaun contestant at a St Patrick's Day festival

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THE TIMES ARTS

MUSIC
PIRELLS' 10th
ANNIVERSARY SHOW
AT THE BOLIDIUM
PAGE 36



What does it take to get children into the theatre? Daniel Rosenthal on gloomy new research

When it is published tomorrow, new research into what 10 to 14-year-olds think about live drama will be eagerly scrutinised by all those theatre managers and artistic directors who talk of the pressing need to build "the audience of tomorrow". They are in for a sobering read.

Asked to name a leisure activity they pursue at weekends or during school holidays, every child in the survey mentioned cinema, but fewer than one in a hundred mentioned theatre. The survey, by the market research company Kids Connection, found that most children find theatres "stuffy and unfriendly", and resent having to sit in "uncomfortable seats far from the stage". They believe tickets are overpriced, and should cost the same as a seat at their local Odeon. The refreshment on offer is another turn-off, and one that managers should not underestimate: in an earlier survey for UCI Cinemas, Kids Connection discovered that

Give us Ross and Roald

more than a third of under-16s went to the movies for popcorn, ice-cream and soft drinks first, and the film second.

At least these perceived deficiencies are essentially cosmetic and, particularly where food and seat prices are concerned, treatable. For example, Sheffield Theatres' current "How Much?" initiative (underwritten by the Arts Council's New Audiences scheme) has been offering tickets to 16-24s for £3.50, prompting 12,000 young people to visit the Lyceum, Crucible and Studio theatres in the last quarter of 1998.

More disheartening — because they are much harder to

counter — are the children's overwhelmingly negative opinions of what they have seen on stage, and of the fundamental nature of theatre as an art form. With their experience confined almost exclusively to pantomimes and touring West End musicals, the majority of children feel disappointed on three counts: there is a dearth of age-appropriate material, no peer-group kudos in attending, and they simply do not believe the on-stage action. Shows were either "babish" or "too serious", with nothing to say about the way these children live their lives.

"These children feel that tele-

vision gives them real life, and cinema gives them fantasy, but they find it very difficult to suspend disbelief in the theatre," says Pevryll Murray, the managing director of Kids Connection. "A lot of them find scene changes obtrusive, and they couldn't get their minds around the fact that characters can't actually go outside on stage." Only a handful of those questioned had ever been carried away by the immediacy of live drama.

Had the researchers gone to regions with minimal local theatre provision, and chosen children from families unable to afford even an occasional visit, their findings might seem unrepresentative. Yet Kids Connection interviewed 164 children from middle and working-class families at two state schools with what Murray calls "theatre-going reputations", one in Birmingham and one in Norwich — both cities which offer a good range of drama. "I really did think we'd get more positive responses," says Murray.

She will present the survey in London tomorrow at "Older Younger", a one-day seminar on the future of theatre for young people and the family. The research was funded by the Arts Council and Sainsbury's, and Lord Sainsbury of Preston Candover will use the seminar to launch an initiative for the commissioning and professional production of new work for young people.

Discussion panels at the event will feature directors with impressive track records in the youth market, including John Retallack, whose exhilarating stage adaptation of *Junk*, Melvin Burgess's contro-

versial novel about teenage heroin addicts, won last year's Barclays Theatre Award for best young people's show and is currently on its second tour.

The survey, suggests Retallack, is a wake-up call for the industry. "At the moment, it's as though children this age are a huge 'disabled' group who from time to time we have to acknowledge," he says. "They lack money, so if you cater just for them you will struggle economically. They lack years, so you cannot choose to put on the kind of adult work that most directors want to stage."

Theatre companies who work exclusively for young people make the best of their resources, but this research tells me that the real initiative has to come from the big national and regional venues. They have to take a much longer-term approach."



A scene from *Junk*, adapted by John Retallack, who dubs the new survey a "wake-up call"

GREAT BRITISH HOPES

Rising stars in the arts firmament

CHARLOTTE BROOM

Profession: Principal dancer with Northern Ballet Theatre, Age: 27.

What is her style? The company's artistic director, Christopher Gable, considered her to have a remarkable ability to identify with roles. "I particularly enjoy dramatic parts as opposed to just technical ones," she says. "I feel I can get much deeper in a performance with a character." This makes her especially suited to NBT's theatrical style.

What's new? From tonight she can be seen at Sadler's Wells as Lucy in the Christopher Gable-Michael Pink *Dracula*. And she takes the ti-



NADINE MEISNER
• Daniel Hope's record label (Great British Hopes, last week) is Nimbus, not Chandos

So what putative productions might persuade children to spend their pocket money on theatre rather than movies or video games? The survey found that what this crowd really, really wants is soap stars and adaptations of books by authors like Terry Pratchett, Judy Blume, Robert Swindells and Roald Dahl. Based on the survey, any producer in search of the ultimate teen hit should opt for *EastEnders*, Ross Kemp in anything by Dahl or, better still, *South Park — The Stage Show*. "A new play, by an author they didn't know, would have to be phenomenally good for them to be interested," says Murray.

Retallack disagrees. "I know of at least five really terrific, unproduced new plays for this age group circulating at the moment, but 90 per cent of them won't touch them because they don't fit into a recognised category. If they were aggressively marketed they could succeed. Young people think they know what they want — but you can surprise them."

• *Junk* is on tour in England and Scotland until June 12 for details call 01865 884240

Epitaph for a wicked world

Tim Nunn's production of *Troilus* displays his usual respect for Shakespeare's text up to but excluding the ending. After the Greeks in their plumed helmets have battled with the Trojans in their oriental robes, he gives us a last, spurious glimpse of Cressida. She stands alone onstage, rejected by a contemptuous Troilus and even by her uncle Pandarus, a pathetic broken sex object, lipstick smeared over her lower face. And gunfire splatters offstage, by way of suggesting that the play is for all seasons, not least our own.

And so it is. *Troilus* marks the debut of the sub-company that Nunn has formed at the National, and it will, I'm sure, do stronger work when its members know each other better. But you cannot leave even an unevenly acted production without seeing why the play has been revived twice by the RSC in the past three years, is now in the Olivier rep, and may get yet another showing in the West End this autumn. Is there a piece that better embodies the disillusioned soul of the departing century? "Nothing but war and lechery," repeats the arch-cynic Thersites, and, yes, that is what our era's dictators and scientists have left us feeling about honour, chivalry and love.

Does Nunn mean to convey some specific anxiety by setting white Greeks against Trojans who, with the illogical exception of David Bamber's

which has often and effectively asked us to blind our imaginations to its actors' colour should suddenly expect to make a point of noticing it?

That's oot to say there are no differences between Shakespeare's Trojans and his Greeks. As Nunn suggests with *Arabian Nights* costumes, exotic cushions and flaming tripods, the home side is the more romantic. The grimy-faced visitors in their battered leather greatcoats are

the more practical and realistic. It is not surprising that Cressida betrays Troilus with Greek Diomed, or that Achilles murders Hector, in this production in a brutally opportunist way. That's how a wicked world wages.

Though the battle scenes are almost too carefully drilled, Nunn achieves some fine visual effects on the gravel circle, backed by a timber wall, that serves for a set. But I have seen nearly every role better played. The main exception is Roger Allam's Ulysses, who is incisive, sly, articulate and so embittered by the war that the very word "Troy" is a furious sneer. Denis Quilley gives emotional reality to Nestor, usually a sullen dodderer; Bamber's Pandarus minces and winces to splendidly voyeuristic effect; and Peter de Jersey makes a passionate Troilus.

But others struggle, among them Jasper Britton's Thersites, whose facial sores are angrier than his innards; Dhoib Opare, whose Hector seems oddly precious; and Sophie Okonedo, who works too hard to motivate Cressida. I liked the idea of a loose-limbed extrovert who ventures way out of her emotional depth, and morally destroys herself in order physically to survive, but there is too much signalling of feeling, too much verbal strain, too many words that come in italics or, I fear, capitals.

BENEDICT NIGHTINGALE



Shakespeare under strain: Jasper Britton (top), Peter de Jersey, Sophie Okonedo and David Bamber at the NT

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Chekhov warned playwrights that if they bring a firearm on stage it must eventually go off, and his advice remains sound, even though he was writing at a time when guns made infrequent appearances in domestic drama. Plenty lurk in Gary Mitchell's new play, set in a Protestant home on the Rathcoole estate in Belfast, where weaponry bought from an absconding British soldier is passed to the UDA.

For much of the time the guns are just silent merchandise, but at last one character pulls out a pistol and takes aim. We must expect it to kill someone, although we know enough about plays to guess the wrong person may be hit. What happens is that Mitchell ignores Chekhov's warning, yet so tense is the point his play has reached that the gun *not* going off creates more of an explosion than any bullet.

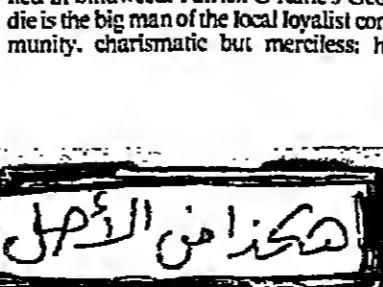
This is the defining moment of the family drama he has developed within the violent social drama, like a shrub all but stifled in bindweed. Patrick O'Kane's Geordie is the big man of the local loyalist community, charismatic but merciless; his

son is vastly more important to her than any other loyalty. Laine Megaw's subtle performance takes us from her loyalist loyalty — where she sparks our initial surprise at her practised handling of a suspect — to the climactic catastrophe.

Megaw's tight, half-smiling features can break into a wrath as unnerving as her man's, and lighten again into a bridge-burning resolve after showing us, through tone of voice and twist of shoulders, how the casebook of her life has altered.

Powerful direction by Mick Gordon and not an orange sash on view.

JEREMY KINGSTON



Funny peculiar, funny ha ha

VISUAL ART: As a new book sheds light on Gilbert and George, Rachel Campbell-Johnston pays them a call

Ring on the doorbell and listen for the footsteps — two sets measuring the boards. Then the door swings open on to London's living artworks, on to two tweed suits and two extended hands and four burnished trogues planted evenly on the floor. Clearly I am looking at one of Gilbert and George's most polished pieces: their "interview sculpture".

"What is it about matching people that unnerves? I flutter nervously under the imperturbable double gaze. "Coffee?" suggests George. "It's only instant," adds Gilbert. "Sugar?" asks George. Gilbert pours milk.

Their manners are formidable. Inside the polished passageways of a Dickensian home, done out in high Victorian style with Puginesque furnishings and leather-bound books, there are no traces of the artists' own works — nothing of the disturbing, defecatory subject-matter that has so shocked or outraged or delighted the critics. But now a biographical portrait completed just before his death last year by the writer Daniel Farson, their longstanding fan and drinking companion, has cast some light on the enigmatic artists.

The long, chill studio space into which I am led is perfectly bare. "We are very organised," George informs me. "Very organised indeed." The contrast is startling between the men standing stiff-spined before me — the taller George, bespectacled and well spoken, with a silver pen in the top pocket of his immaculately tailored suit; the shorter Gilbert, with a soulful brown gaze, an Italian accent and a comb in the top pocket of his immaculately tailored suit — and the works which the two have done together since they first met at St Martin's art school some 30 years ago. What could pieces with titles like *Sperm Eaters* or *Spit on Shit* have to do with this jaundiced duo?

The artists gleefully agree. "We had a friend who was poorly in hospital," Gilbert tells me. "We sent him a card. One of our own: *Spank and Tears*. He put it on his bedside table and the nurses loved it. And when we went to visit our friend they were all very charming." "But after we had left," George goes on, "they said they couldn't believe that we were the artists of the card. 'Not those respectable men!' they cried."

Richard Cork on an eerie video installation about the Greenham missile base

Once a well-publicised target for women campaigning against the nightmare of nuclear annihilation, Greenham Common has now lapsed into disuse. The US military's English base served as an arsenal for cruise missiles, and Greenham became a symbol of apocalyptic menace, its placid rural setting only throwing into relief the horrifying prospect of a planet laid waste by irreversible conflagration.

Jane and Louise Wilson are young enough never to have witnessed Greenham's former notoriety. But they insist in their haunting exhibition at the Lissom Gallery, on bringing the dormant base back to an eerie semblance of life. By calling their video projection *Gamma* the Wilson twins imply that Greenham's radioactive past is not forgotten. And in order to show how disquieting the abandoned buildings remain, the two artists take us on a journey to the heart of places where missiles used to lie in permanent expectation.

Even as we enter the gallery, amplified sounds of rising and descending lifts, the ominous hum emitted by machines and the snapping-shut of mighty metal doors assail our ears. Once inside, we find large screens positioned on opposite walls. Anyone wanting a comprehensive viewing is obliged to stand between them, and turn continually from one set of images to the other. Even here, though, it is impossible to catch everything.

The perpetual swivelling makes us disorientated and incapable of absorbing all the sensations competing for our attention. The sense of bewilderment generated is surely



The end of the pier show. George and Gilbert ("our motto is that nothing matters") take a break from the serious business of producing art to sniff the sea air in Brighton

The respectable pair collapse into chiming laughter.

The laughter connects the artists to their work. I had assumed they would be grave; as unsmiling as their portraits. I was wrong. In their studio Gilbert and George pull out plans of their new work. They have spent the last few months rifling through a copy of the London A-Z picking out all the places with unfortunate names: Spankers Hill Wood, Spert Street, Swallow Street, Organ Lane. They laugh uncontrollably at

the double entendres. Excitedly they rifle through contact prints of urine photographed under a microscope. "Piss 1-100" the box is labelled. "Aren't they beautiful?" Gilbert cries, admiring crystalline patterns. "Our paintings make people look at piss for the first time and see that it is beautiful," explains Gilbert. "Beauty has an amazing power," George declares.

They show me pictures of themselves, naked, or with trousers round their ankles, or bending over,

buttocks splayed. "Of course we feel vulnerable when we hang them in a gallery," says George. "But people find their own vulnerability in our art as well. Our art is about emotion. We are creating the visual language of suffering, or awkwardness, or ecstasy. And we are more frank about our art than any other artist."

And yet, as they profess, their art is their life, they are contradicting themselves. They covet their privacy. No one is ever allowed into their bedroom. Gilbert's former

marriage is airbrushed out of their biography. "We aren't prepared to provide a list of all the people we have ever shagged. We don't think that's helpful," George closes the conversation primly.

But perhaps this hiatus is the most interesting aspect of their art, articulating the paradoxical and painful dissonance of the human state, as at one moment we put on our public face, the next crouch trouserless on a lavatory pan.

And perhaps this is the "consola-

tion" which Gilbert and George offer those who go to see their art: that the higher up the tree of life we climb, the better the gaping masses below can see our bottoms. Nothing can matter too much when you remember that.

NO. Nothing matters. Our motto is that nothing matters." Gilbert says. "Nothing matters, nothing matters," Gilbert agrees.

• Gilbert and George: *A Portrait* by Daniel Farson is published by HarperCollins this week, price £19.99

AROUND THE GALLERIES

SOME artists almost choose to make themselves outsiders. When Peter Samuelson was rediscovered he was living in deepest Oxfordshire, supporting himself by restoring oriental carpets and lending a hand on a nearby farm. Bizarre, one might think, for an artist of such evident talent and approachability.

After training in Paris and living during the war years in The Netherlands, he returned to England and disappeared from the art world, running a lodging house in Earls Court instead. But he always painted and drew a lot of handsome young men drifted in and out of his lodging house, and he developed his own mordacious realistic style of portraiture.

Finally he stopped painting altogether, and took it up again only with the stimulus of outside interest in his art, when he was in his early seventies. This no doubt explains why this first cult from the atelier full of paintings he left at his death makes its appearance in the Cotswolds, where he spent his last years. The style (not to mention the subject-matter) is no doubt easier to appreciate now, post-Hockney, than it would have been in the Fifties, in particular Samuelson's exquisite draughtsmanship and his subtle and delicate colouring.

Brian Sinfield Gallery, 150 High St, Burford, Oxfordshire (01993 824464), daily 10am-5.30pm, until March 27

■ Liam Hanley is by no means an outsider, but he seems to keep himself sedulously upon the fringes, as though his art is somehow too private to be launched on the great indiscriminate merry-go-round of the West End art world — it has an air of keeping its secrets. Hanley paints with single-minded dedication, his work mostly on that elusive borderline between representation and abstraction.

A few years ago he became obsessed with the patterns made by ploughed fields: in this new show his focus seems to have shifted to the sea coast. Most of these small pictures find rough squares and cubes even in the sea itself, though they avoid excessive rigidity through the occasional intervention of curling winds and waves. The colouring this time is also more vibrant.

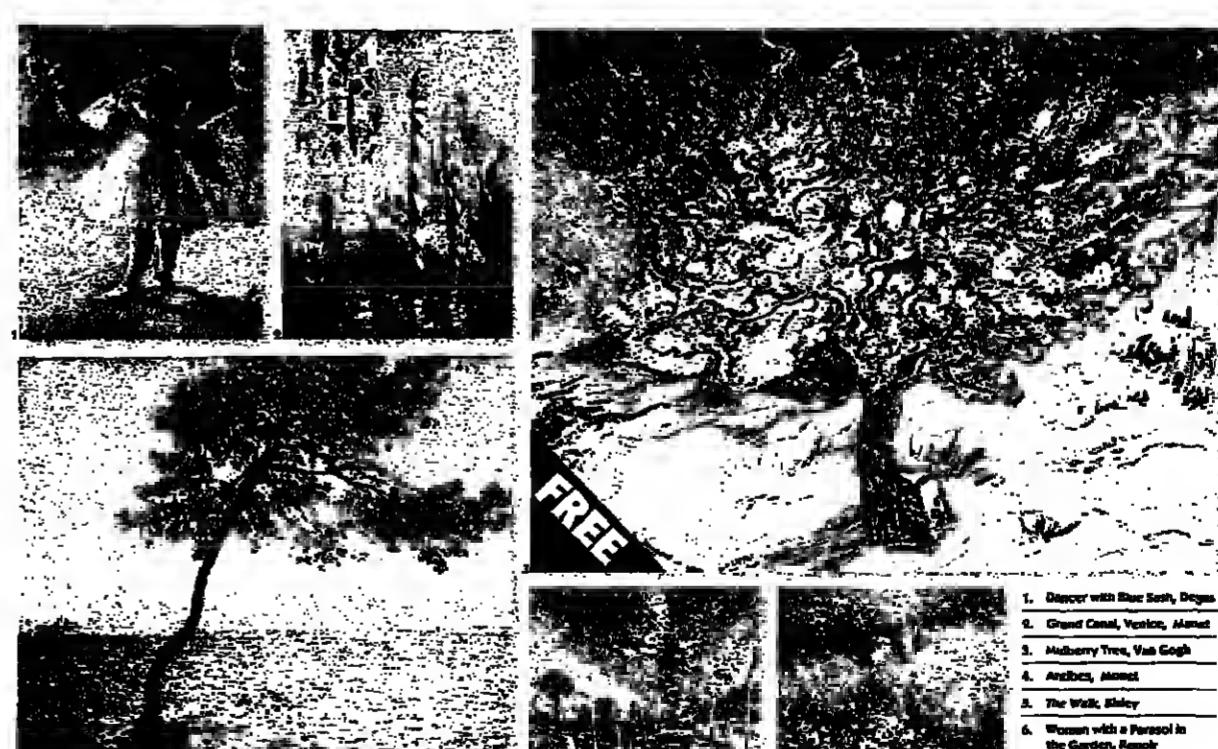
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Two blue plastic chairs sit there, as if recently vacated. The sound of ticking adds to the unease, a mood heightened when we find ourselves confronted by a close-up of an official form headed "Soviet Inspection". The words may well refer to the Greenham base's current status, defunct and yet subject to an INF treaty that permits scrutiny by Russian military at any time until 2001. No sign of such a visit can be detected in *Gamma*.

But sometimes the Wilsons compound the mystery by reg-

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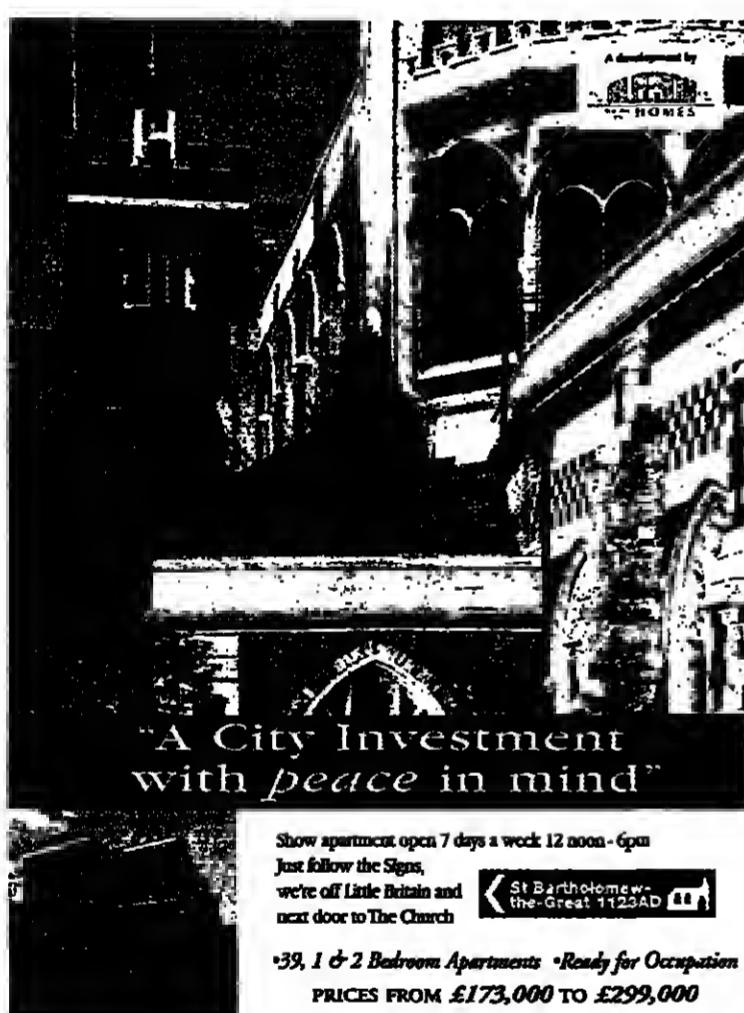
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Inner cities look East

New housing can reflect the needs of ethnic communities, says Stella Bingham

Projects designed to regenerate inner-city wastelands usually concentrate on housing shortages, family size, density and design. The ethnic origin of those likely to be living in them is rarely taken into account. But two schemes address the needs and aspirations of multicultural urban dwellers.

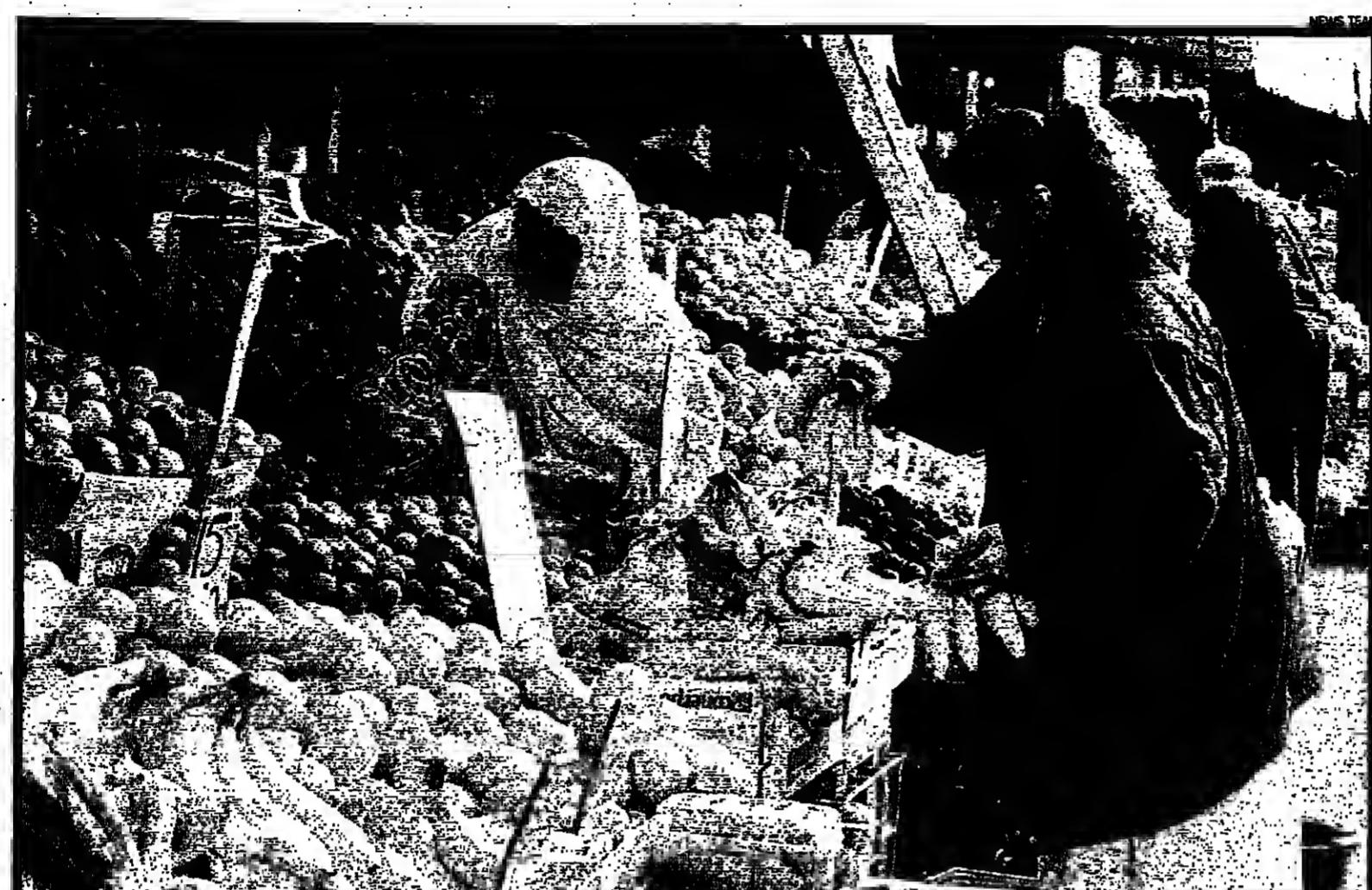
In Birmingham the Saltley and Small Heath Single Regeneration Budget scheme covers a district with a population of 55,000. "The area has always had an itinerant population and now the important group is South Asian. Some areas are 70 per cent South Asian," says Wendy Shillam, a partner with Shillam & Smith, the community architects for the scheme.

"It is essentially a Victorian suburb but the housing is in a very bad state, built on heathland and former brick pits. A lot of the property is owner-occupied but often it is not in good condition because the owners haven't the wherewithal for the upkeep."

Another problem is sheer size. "South Asian families tend to live in large, extended households which the average two-up, two-down cannot accommodate. Often they would buy two and knock them into one, but such homes are very unadaptable. The project aims to improve and provide more housing and regenerate the area. Our aim is to have more community-led strategies," she says.

The first challenge was to find out what residents actually wanted from the scheme. "We linked up with the mobile library to talk to people. And we instituted a public art project, which helped us to communicate with two groups we felt we were missing — Asian women and children. We addressed some of the housing issues they worried, such as the quality of external space and healthier living."

The year-long consultation



A consultation with inner-city residents resulted in a report, spelling out how housing should change to reflect the needs of multicultural communities

resulted in a detailed report about how housing should change to reflect the needs of the population. "Residents wanted flexibility, the ability to put two houses together or split them apart," Ms Shillam says. "Aesthetically, they wanted to get away from the Victorian imperialist style. And they wanted a low-energy building that considered the ecology."

"Larger and more flexible homes would be more attractive not only to South Asians, but to people with elderly relatives, older children or those starting a business at home."

The first results of the public consultation will be in stark contrast to the traditional red-brick terraces. Some of the 34 flat-roofed, concrete houses will be grouped round a courtyard to reflect the Asian homeland pattern of living. External walls will be robust, possibly brightly painted, simple, easy to repair or change, and designed to grow old gracefully.

"None of the internal partitions is structural, so you can change and add on as you have the money," she says. "We're building homes 20 per cent bigger for the same money, so they won't have a fully fitted kitchen and all the other things you get in a spec building. You can walk in and live there and add on as you want to and can afford to. There will be no brass doorknobs and microwaves but you will have space."

Shillam & Smith hopes to obtain planning permission soon. "We had to be careful to convince the planners that the houses wouldn't go out of fashion in a very short time. But the construction techniques are tried and tested and we have the support of the community," Ms Shillam says. "A number of developers are already showing interest."

"The housing addresses the specialist issues not only of the South Asians, but also the

wider issues of how we want to live. This project helps us to make living in inner cities more acceptable and attractive."

A similar idealism is at the heart of the project which inspires Saif Ahmad, the chief executive of the North London Muslim Housing Association.

The association, which has 400 homes in the London boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Newham, Hackney and Waltham Forest, has unveiled a ten-year, £500 million programme to build 10,000 homes in some of London's most deprived districts.

"Rome wasn't built in a day and you have to have the right vision," Mr Ahmad says. "The main point is to regenerate the community, to foster tolerance, understanding, care for each other and to enrich British society with its diverse cultural heritage."

There are about 250,000 Muslims in the four boroughs and Mr Ahmad would like them to be seen as a unifying force. "We are not a fifth column. I would like to create a community for people who live here and love it. Tower Hamlets and Newham are 50 per cent Muslim. Some council estates are 95 per cent Bangladeshi, which creates an insular community. If 50 per cent were local and 50 per cent from various Muslim ethnic groups, that would create a diverse community. People often say integration at what price. We say integration through tolerance," he says.

Mr Ahmad hopes to incorporate Islamic architectural influences of the sort seen in Spain and Portugal into basic British house designs. "We are discussing this with architects and English Heritage and will adjust according to the rules. This is about regeneration in quite deprived areas. There is a religious obligation to help out."

finance and government grants. We are trying to find the mechanism with which we can tap into government resources for a head start, but it is a new model and we need to talk to a lot of people."

The association plans a first phase of 50 to 100 houses. "We are trying to identify a locality with the need and a favourable host community. Once the first project goes through, we can go to the Government with an example. Once the model starts, after three or four years the scheme will gain momentum," he says.

Peter Potter, who with her brother Bertram had a strict upbringing in Kensington, West London, was educated mainly by governesses. The most exciting moments of her life were holidays in rural Scotland, where Potter met Charlie McIntosh, an amateur naturalist who inspired her fascination with nature. Potter frequently visited Eastwood, where she also created Mrs Tiggywinkle and Jeremy Fisher.

The property's impressive garden, now firmly netted against rabbits, leads down to the river, which is well-stocked with salmon. William Jackson, of Knight Frank,

SMART MOVES

Lord Soper's house for sale



Lord Soper: radical messages

■ THE home of Lord Soper, the radical preacher who spread messages of faith at Speakers' Corner for 70 years, is for sale for £600,000. Lord Soper who died in December, aged 95, was still preaching in his last year of life, despite being confined to a wheelchair. The detached three-bedroom house in Bigwood Road, in the heart of Hampstead Garden Suburb, had been his home for 30 years. "It's an attractive double-gabled, cottage-style property with gardens on two sides," says Keith Ackerman, of Benson & Reeves.

■ PARK HOUSE, in Rutland Gate — located in the grounds of Rutland House, in Knightsbridge — is for sale. The house was built for John Sheepshanks (1787-1863), an art connoisseur and public benefactor whose collections of British paintings included Constables and Turners. It has recently been occupied by the Accademia Italiana, which took it over from the French Consulate in 1989, and is for sale through Michael Tims & Company for £8 million.



Peter Rabbit: created in Scotland

says: "There is a demand for country houses in Perthshire and it is rare that one of such quality is offered for lease. I believe that the addition of the salmon fishing on one of Scotland's most famous rivers will add to the interest."

Knight Frank's Edinburgh office is letting the partly furnished house for an initial period of two to three years. The annual rent, including gardening services, is £20,000.

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CHANGING TIMES

SOMETIMES
IT'S EASIER
TO TALK
TO SOMEONE
YOU
DON'T LIKE.



PHOTOGRAPH: STEPHEN LEATHES
If you tell your
girlfriend,
will she think
less of you?

When you have a problem, it's the most natural thing in the world to want to talk it through with someone.

Sometimes, though, this creates another problem: who's the best person to confide in?

An obvious choice would be a close friend. But let's face it, we don't always choose our friends for their amazing powers of tact, diplomacy and discretion. Tell one person, and you may end up telling the world.

You may be lucky enough to be able to talk to someone in your family. Then again, you may be one of the large number of people who find talking to your nearest and dearest agonisingly embarrassing.

A girlfriend or boyfriend? If you can, great. But sometimes we don't want to expose our weaknesses to those who fancy us.

And sometimes your relationship is

the very problem you want to discuss. That's where The Samaritans can be useful. We're more discreet than your best mate, we'll listen as carefully as your girlfriend or boyfriend, and we're as sympathetic as your family. We're also non-judgemental, unshockable, and extremely experienced.

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And you don't have to be climbing up the walls before you call us — any kind of problem, big or small, is a good enough reason to pick up the phone.

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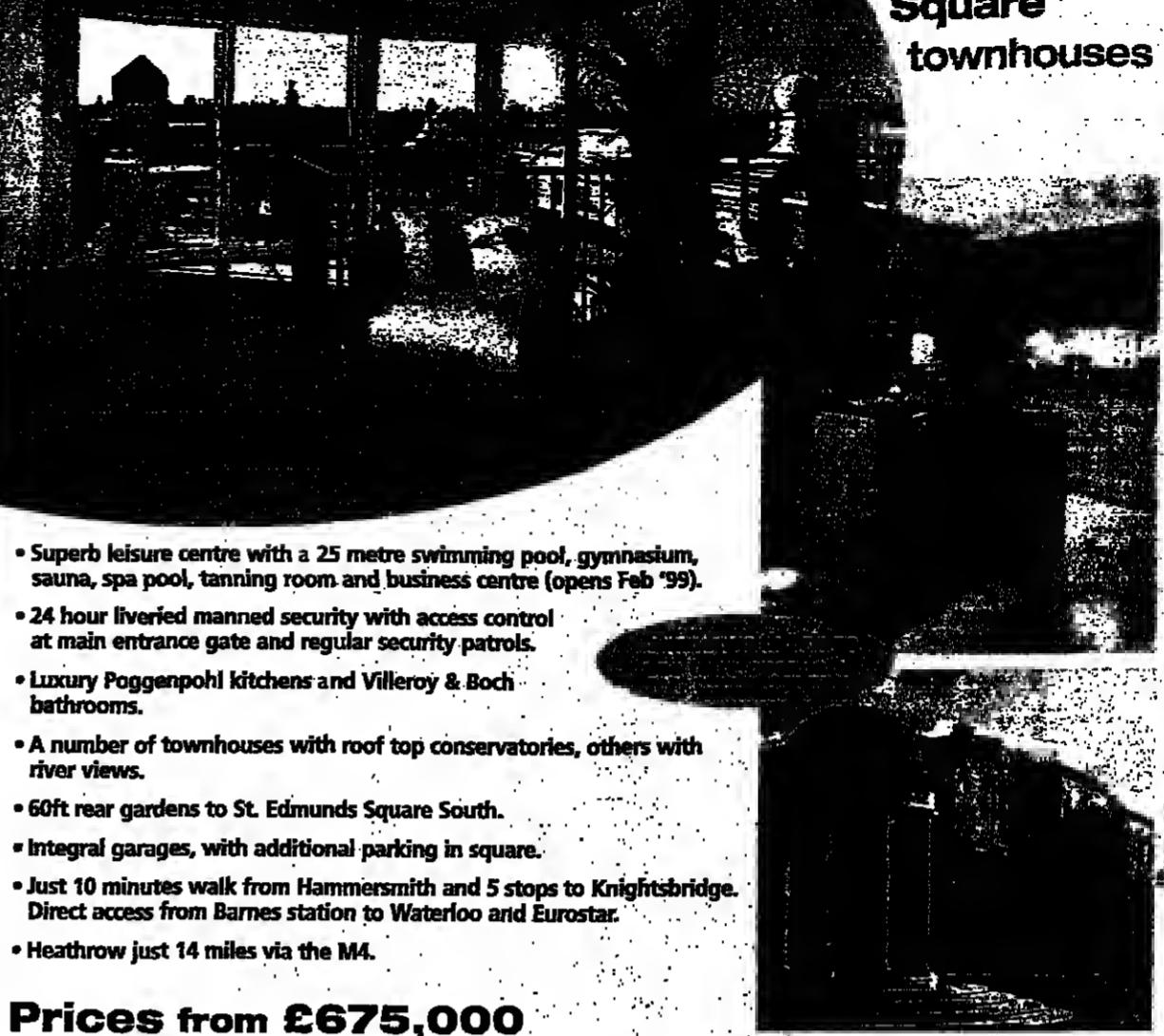
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CHANGING

RACING: TEENAGE JOCKEY GIVES NICHOLLS HIS FIRST CHELTENHAM FESTIVAL SUCCESS

Tizzard proves equal to task

By CHRIS MCGRATH

TWELVE months ago Joe Tizzard's talent — long obvious to those who saw him as a boy, hunting in the Somerset hills — was radiantly confirmed to a broader public when he won the Christies Foxhunter Chase aboard Earthmover. However, some have wondered whether the teenage jockey is equal to the giddy rate of his promotion since.

There was, then, no escaping the sense that he had won more than the Guinness Arkle Trophy when Flagship Uberalles crossed the finishing line at Cheltenham yesterday. As he punched the air Tizzard, 19, was proclaiming a coming of age — just in time for his date with Double Thriller in the Tote Cheltenham Cup tomorrow. A first Festival success for Paul Nicholls, who shares the status of rising star in his own profession, was due reward for the trainer's faith in his stable jockey.

They had found the most resourceful of allies in Flagship Uberalles, whose performance — he took the lead two out, after the front runners had burnt themselves to a cinder — was redolent of his half-brother, Viking Flagship, who always banished so bravely up the same hill. The last-run race was always going to suit this



Hors La Loi, ridden by McCoy, clears the last on his way to victory in the opening race

horse," Nicholls said. "He really wants further. He was brilliant." Tizzard added: "We were flat to the boards the whole way, but he kept jumping well and galloping. I can't put the feeling into words."

A vivid vocabulary undoubtedly suggested itself to Jamie

Osborne when taking a nasty fall with Kadou Nonantais, favourite for the William Hill National Hunt Chase. It was over the same Cheltenham fences that Osborne had shattered his left wrist 15 months ago, and for a while it seemed as though a grisly symmetry

had maimed his right hand. Thankfully hospital X-rays revealed no break and he may yet ride Tom in the Queen Mother Champion Chase today. Graham Bradley stands by to replace him.

The class act on the supporting card is quoted 12-1 by

Coral to dethrone Istabraq in the millennium Smurfit Champion Hurdle. Hors La Loi pulled 17 lengths clear in the opening Citroen Supreme Novices' Hurdle, ensuring that Martin Pipe and Tony McCoy resumed precisely where they left off last year. It was the winner's first start for the champion on team after an expensive transfer from France and Paul Green, his new owner, said: "When Martin told me how much it would cost [in excess of £150,000] I left him and walked away."

Istabraq apart, Irish ambitions for the opening day were otherwise disappointed until Generosa won the last race, the Staldis Casinos Final. Her jockey, Norman Williamson, had already won the William Hill National Hunt Chase on Betty's Boy, providing trainer, Kim Bailey, with an upturn in fortunes. "That means a hell of a lot after the season I've had," Bailey said. "I owe huge thanks to the patience of my owners."

There was a nasty incident in the King Muir, Fulke Walwyn Chase, but the five amateur riders who shared a pile-up walked away unscathed. A domino effect was triggered when Time Won't Wait lost his footing. The chaos cleared a path for Bruce Gibson on Celtic Giant, a first Festival winner for Len Lungo.

The Cheltenham Festival is the most wonderful three days in the year, the rise of spring, the gathering of the clans, an annual pilgrimage, a three-day orgy of joy, the greatest — Oh shut up about the Cheltenham Festival. This is one of those weird events that is either the most important three days of the year, or it hardly matters at all. Which is fair enough; but those that love it simply can't stop trying to convert everybody else to the true faith.

The television coverage is based on this principle. Channel 4 even ran a pre-Festival documentary, in which the most memorable part was played by the lady in charge of keeping the lavatories clean.

The fact is that not everybody is in thrall to the magic. There are those not interested at all, and there are those who take the robust view that the racing is all very fine and wonderful, but if they wanted Guinness spilt on their trousers, they are perfectly capable of doing it themselves in the privacy of their own homes.

Which leaves you with television: and the fact of the matter is that once Channel 4 stop telling us how bloody marvelous it all is, it is.

Any sport that dares to put the best against the best is like

SIMON BARNES



ARMCHAIR VIEW

to make wonderful television and Cheltenham has houses as well. And adding to my personal pleasures, many of them I have had the honour of putting.

Not, alas, the day's hero, and the hero of the day's finest television moment. They dared to show the run to the second flight in the Champion Hurdle from head-on. And what a head, too: the bright bay face of Istabraq, made unforgettable by the beautiful white gemstone marking.

A wave of horses bearing down on the breaker of the hurdle. The huge French Holly (I've painted him), the grey colt City Hall (and him), and as I prepared a shout for the trainers who had received me so very kindly, so I fell silent and watched instead the triumph of beauty and class.

A head-on at such a stage in a flat race would be meaning.

less, but in a jumping race it was perfect. For it was Istabraq that rose on the crest of the wave and surged home, a champion becoming a double champion and who would be against a treble.

The horse started at unbackably short odds. Before the race we had Istabraq's jockey, Charlie Swan, an amiable man looking quite ill with tension — television, as ever saw beneath the bonhomous smile.

Swan's face told the real story about anticipation. Cheltenham is not a party, still less a pilgrimage. It is about very serious risk.

To reputation, to limb to life. Some of the last pictures of the day showed poor Jamie Osborne, the jockey, being taken to hospital after a truly bonfire fall. I spoke to him on the telephone a week ago: a nice man who went seriously out of his way to oblige.

Risk: that is what Cheltenham is really all about. Two images that stay with you: a jockey with white face obscured by an oxygen mask; a bay-faced horse surging head-on to glory, distinguished by a white gemstone.



CHELTENHAM FESTIVAL

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MEETING POINTS
THE TIMES GUIDE TO THE GOING TODAY

CHELTHAM
Jumps, 7 race card
1st race: 2.00
Winning favourites: 40.3%
TV: Channel 4 1.30-4.30

HUNTINGDON
Jumps, 7 race card
1st race: 1.50
Winning favourites: 44.9%
TV: none

NEWTON ABBOT
Jumps, 7 race card
1st race: 1.55
Winning favourites: 43.5%
TV: none

EARLY BIRD
Best value this morning
Better Offer
33-1 with Coral and Ladbrokes
3-15 Cheltenham
See racecards for detailed going

HUNTINGDON
ROB WRIGHT
1.50 Real Fire. 2.25 2002 Auditor. 2.55 High Mood.
3.30 Bartholomew Fair. 4.10 Seize The Day. 4.40 Trouble Ahead. 5.15 Gandegg Gavotte.

GOING: SOFT (GOOD TO SOFT IN PLACES) SIS

1.50 KEYSOE SELLING HANDICAP HURDLE

1. P2P HELLO ME MAN (F.G.S) 9 (L) 11-12
2. 4335 HOTSPUR STREET (4) (L.G) E. J. Llewellyn
3. 0529 COWALL (P) & Hobbs 8-11-3
4. P2P REAL FIRE (V) 15 (V) 10-1-2
5. 0402 2002 AUDITOR (V) 15 (V) 10-1-2
6. 5-00 DUNSTON HEATH 32 B Levy 6-10-3
7. 00-P SPURS SPUR (V) 6-10-1-1
8. 000F BAYLOR PRINCE 37 (E.G.S) 4-5-1 Ever 9-10-3
9. 000F TILLY 25 (L.G) 11-12-3
10. 000F TILLY 25 (L.G) 11-12-3
11. 000F TILLY 25 (L.G) 11-12-3

1.50 KEYSOE SELLING HANDICAP HURDLE

(2.740; 2m 51 110yd) (17)

1. 000F ACCADEMIA 29 (M) Murphy 6-11-5
2. F404 AMERICAN STYLE 18 (M) McKee 7-1-5
3. 000F REAL FIRE 15 (V) 10-1-2
4. 000F TILLY 25 (L.G) 11-12-3
5. 043 AUDITOR 19 (L) Web 6-11-5
6. 0-SP BURN OUT (P) J. Gillard 7-1-5
7. 000F TILLY 25 (L.G) 11-12-3
8. 000F TILLY 25 (L.G) 11-12-3
9. 000F TILLY 25 (L.G) 11-12-3
10. 000F TILLY 25 (L.G) 11-12-3
11. 000F TILLY 25 (L.G) 11-12-3

2.20 HITCHIN HAULAGE MAIDEN HURDLE

(2.697; 2m 6f) (7)

1. 000F BRIGHT FLAME 48 (D.S) Mess 7-12-0
2. 000F ACCURACY LAUD 70 (D.G) 7-1-11
3. 000F FAIRYTALE 47 (D.G) L Jones 10-1-1
4. 000F ELEGANT DES COSES 11 (D.G.S) P Hobbs 7-1-2
5. 0451 THE MINNIE 9 (D.G) C. Eason 15-10-0
6. 000F BILLY BLAZER 12 (D.G.S) R. Frost 10-1-2
7. 1-SP LANDLORD 6 (D.G) Mess 7-1-0
7-2 ACCURACY LAUD 11-12-3
8. 000F BILLY BLAZER 12 (D.G.S) R. Frost 10-1-2
9. 000F BILLY BLAZER 12 (D.G.S) R. Frost 10-1-2
10. 000F BILLY BLAZER 12 (D.G.S) R. Frost 10-1-2
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FOOTBALL

Celtic pair set to cash in with Wednesday deal

By PHIL GORDON AND STEPHEN WOOD

PHIL O'DONNELL and Simon Donnelly will quadruple their salaries when they complete their moves from Celtic to Sheffield Wednesday. The players, both available on free transfers under the Bosman ruling, have signed pre-contract agreements for next season, although Wednesday said yesterday that they have not yet given up hope of recruiting them earlier.

"We've come to an agreement with both players and they will join us in the summer, if not before," Danny Wilson, the Wednesday manager, said. He has offered a nominal fee to enable the midfield players to move to Hillsborough before the transfer deadline.

"We're still talking with Celtic and if something happens, then great," Wilson said. "If it doesn't happen and we can't force the issue, then we will sign them before the start

of next season. If we can get them before then it will be a big boost, but they will be a boost to the squad anyway because it adds competition for places, which is what we have been trying to do."

If Celtic are left out of pocket it will mirror the situation when John Collins took advantage of the Bosman ruling by joining AS Monaco in 1996. Uefa, the European governing body, subsequently ruled against Celtic's £3 million compensation claim, although the market value of O'Donnell and Donnelly would only match that sum combined.

Celtic's stringent pay policy for domestic players meant that Donnelly and O'Donnell, like Collins, decided that their futures lay away from Celtic Park. Donnelly, 24, who was in the Scotland squad at the World Cup finals last summer, scored 16 goals last

season as Celtic won the championship, yet he was one of the poorest-paid players in the first-team squad.

While foreign recruits — including Regi Blinker, the Holland winger, who joined from Wednesday — were kept on the bench by Donnelly's form, they earned three times as much as he did. Donnelly and O'Donnell can expect to earn £3 million each during their four-year contracts with the FA Carling Premiership club.

O'Donnell, 26, was Celtic's record transfer when he moved from Motherwell in 1994 for £1.75 million and while his time at the club has been blighted by injury he will be leaving after probably his most consistent season.

"Wednesday offered us the security that Celtic didn't but I am disappointed that Celtic didn't go to any great extremes to keep us," O'Donnell said. "Both my contract and Simon's expired in four months and while Celtic made us an initial offer some time ago, which was not difficult to reject, they had a long time to resolve the situation."

"I could not hold on for ever for Celtic. They were my preferred option if the deal was right, but there had been no contact within the last eight weeks. Sheffield Wednesday, however, were very impressive, as was the manager."

Wilson, however, is facing disappointment in his attempt to bring Michael Mols, the Utrecht striker, to Hillsborough. The deal appeared to be finalised before Rangers, leaders of the Scottish Premier League, showed an interest and Mols has admitted that Rangers are now the favourites to secure his services.

Wilson insisted that the acquisitions of O'Donnell and Donnelly were not a knee-jerk reaction to his failure to tempt Mols to the club. "The two Celtic lads would have joined us whatever happened," he said. "They can play in a number of positions across midfield and up front and, because they've played regularly for Celtic in Europe, they have tremendous experience. They are fresh faces and will add some competition to the squad."

Wednesday are still interested in strengthening their squad before the transfer deadline on March 25. Chris Waddle, the former Wednesday player, is believed to have watched Pascual Numa, a striker with RC Lens, the French champions, on their behalf.

He said: "I must get people to understand that what I was actually given the sack for — the punishment for disabled people from other lifetimes — is not my belief and it's not what I said."

Hoddle also admitted that "negative publicity" given to his relationship with David Beckham must have affected the Manchester United midfield player.

"I've seen it from the players' perspective and it obviously has an adverse effect on them," Hoddle said. "I spoke about David and how well he had coped and acquitted himself since the World Cup. The next day's headline was 'Hoddle blasts Beckham' — the total opposite of what I was saying. You can't tell me that wouldn't affect David."

Glenn Hoddle has still to come to terms with his sacking as England coach, six weeks after being relieved of his duties over his comments on reinternation and the disabled.

"I pinch myself sometimes and think I should still be going into the office and be preparing for the game against France," Hoddle tells *The Lion's Den*, a documentary on the England job to be broadcast on BBC 1 next week.

"Every now and again it hits you. If we'd lost three games on the trot and I got the sack, *c'est la vie*. But that's not the case and that's what is so sad."

Hoddle, 40, still believes that his comments, reported in an interview with *The Times*, were misinterpreted.

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Simeone	60/1	66/1	100/1
Paulo Sousa	80/1	100/1	150/1
Zanetti	100/1	125/1	200/1
Winter	125/1	150/1	225/1
First player to score	MAN. UTD to win by 1-0	2-0	2-1
Yorke	25/1	50/1	150/1
Cole	28/1	66/1	150/1
Beckham	66/1	150/1	300/1
Giggs	66/1	150/1	300/1
Keane	100/1	250/1	450/1
Stevens	7/5/1	37/5/1	300/1

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Great pitch — a shame about the players

It's only after seeing him being interviewed by Alan Hansen on *Football Millionaires* (BBC1) that you understand how David Beckham ran up a £1,600 telephone bill talking to his fiance, Posh Spice, during a World Cup qualifying week in Georgia. The first £1,000 must have been swallowed up just struggling to tell her what the weather was like. Talking coherently, really does seem to be that much of an effort for him. If listening to Beckham speak keeps you on the edge of your seat, it's not because he is saying anything gripping, but because you're worrying if he's going to make it to the end of the sentence. Beckham has the football talent of a Titan, but the mental complexity of a tomato. But so what if he does? Beckham doesn't earn £8 million a year as a stand-up comedian. He's a footballer. He's not paid to sound eloquent. There are very few

players like Camus, or even Canto, on today's pitches. Even great novelists can sound as dull as dirt when asked to speak in public again, why should we expect writers to sound fluent when their skill is milking 500 useable words out of their typewriter every day? Beckham's inarticulacy last night was not really his problem. But it certainly was Hansen's. It meant that a documentary which must have sounded tantalising when it was being pitched — there are 70 millionaires in the Premiership, and rich footballers now have a magazine just for them, full of adverts aimed at the thickness of their wallets — proved less riveting than watching Scarborough play. This may explain why Hansen kept returning, like a desperate drunk to the liquor bottle, to players like David Ginola and Tony Adams. Ginola and Adams, while they weren't saying much, at least said it in joined-up thinking.

THE one new fact to emerge — well, Hansen certainly made it sound like a scoop — was Beckham's admission that after his failed sending-off during last summer's World Cup, Hoddie didn't even speak to him after the game. So Beckham behaved like a spoilt brat, after which Hoddie behaved like a chilly, charmless

churl: actually, there's not much new there, either. Still, the clips of all those goals were good. I'm not sure that Germaine Greer's *Close to the Bone*, Louise Wardle's film for BBC2's *Close Up* series, told us all that much we didn't know about its subject either: but at least it told it entertainingly, with plenty of delicious archive footage. The problem with Greer, of course, is not getting her

to talk but shutting her up. She is fiercely smart. Nevertheless, a lot of what she says is either courageous or barking, which doesn't stop her believing it entirely and passionately: this is part of her strange charm.

For example, nobody will faint with shock when they read that the subtitle of her new book, *The Whole Woman*, is "It's Time To Get Angry Again". Greer can get angry about three new things before breakfast. And she'll never tap you on the shoulder to attract your attention if she can grab you by the lapels and hoist you against the wall. Getting angry has become such an insatiable part of her approach to the world that she can now say even very obvious or banal things (such as, "tea is often drunk with milk") as if she were revealing a great truth — and if we dunderheads refuse to acknowledge this important truth, then the world will go to hell in a hand-

basket ("For Chrissake, if women aren't being offered milk in their tea, then a helluva lot of women are simply not getting tea the way they like it. It's insanity!"). Don't bother arguing back. As wide as Greer's vocabulary is, "I take your point" is not a phrase she probably uses often.

Listen to her giving a lecture. She is explaining to her mostly female audience why sexual intercourse is not necessarily a mark of intimacy by comparing it to sticking her little finger up a man's nostril: to Greer, both acts represent the same degree of penetration ("You're not really inside them at all"). Now, either I'm doing something wrong, or there's actually quite a big difference between these two actions — and that's over and above what Greer's thesis might imply about people who pick their nose in public. Greer herself seems to be past

penetration, past earth-shaking orgasms too exhausting, she says) and, for all we know, past inserting her finger up men's nostrils, because she confessed that what she now likes doing best is thinking: "I'm very keen on thinking." But what makes her stand out is that few people are willing then to bare their thoughts and passions so publicly, unconcerned about how batty others might find her.

The jacket designers of her new book had bite their tongue when she rejected their prototypes in favour of a photograph we saw her taking on her kitchen table of a Philippine fertility amulet embedded in a raw steak (which she later ate), an image which she believed conveyed the meaty, bloody, fertility of womanhood. It would have been nice to know if this image also reminded David Beckham of his beloved Posh — provided, of course, we had enough time to hang around for his answer.

REVIEW

Joe Joseph

BBC1

6.00am *Business Breakfast* (89098)
7.00 *BBC Breakfast News* (T) (32017)
9.00 *Kilroy* (T) (2452291)
9.45 *Wipeout* (9391956)
10.10 *The Vanessa Show* (T) (7342630)
10.55 *News; Weather* (T) (3902017)
11.00 *Change That* (3914921)
11.25 *Can't Cook, Won't Cook* (T) (3892253)
11.55 *News; Weather* (T) (7860291)
12.00 *Call My Bluff* (29494)
12.30pm *Top Tip Challenge* (T) (4443949)
12.55 *The Weather Show* (T) (53587948)
1.00 *One O'Clock News* (T) (35104)
1.30 *Regional News; Weather* (59409524)
1.40 *Neighbours*: Toadie is accused of pooping Happy the dog (T) (35459922)
2.05 *Imanielle* (T) (7607271)
3.25 *Children's BBC*: Playdays (3302524)
4.45 *Link* (T) (2711208)
5.30 *Circle of Life* (4301388) 4.10 See II.
8.10 *Saw It* (5243679) 4.35 *The Wild House* (398027) 5.00 *Newround* (4645253)
5.10 *Blue Peter* (332340)
5.35 *Neighbours* (T) (934727)
6.00 *9 O'Clock News; Weather* (T) (659)
6.30 *Regional News Magazine* (611)
CHOICE *Megabab '99* Peter Snow and Philippa Forrester encourage viewers to take part in the largest ever mass participation experiment (T) (3307)



Kate Winslet in an early episode of the long-running medical drama (spn)

8.00 **CHOICE** *Casualty 250*: *The Full Medical* A celebration of Britain's longest-running medical drama, drawing on the experiences of those familiar with Hilly City (8.30) and *Gretna Green* (8.45).
8.50 *The National Lottery: Greatest Hits* Heaven 17 proved the music as *Angela Griffin* presents the draw (T) (524727)
9.00 *Nine O'Clock News; Regional News; Weather* (T) (6727) 6.27
9.30 *Jasper Carrott: Back to the Front* More stand-up comedy (4/6) (T) (34814)
10.00 **CHOICE** *The X Files* An attempt on the life of a psychic boy and a chance encounter with a woman from Mulder's past spark an investigation which may finally unravel the mystery of the *X-Files*. Last in series (T) (780388)
10.25 *Casualty 250* Poisonous gas floods the docks, and Baz realises that a friend may be responsible (T) (734415)
11.40 *Prelude to a Kiss* (1992) A mysterious old man causes a new bride to undergo a bizarre personality change. Romantic liaison, with Meg Ryan and Alec Baldwin. Directed by Norman Reiss (T) (406765)
12.00 *Weather* (1061234)
1.25 *BBC News 24* (3453695)

WALES:

10.50 *The State* (885920) 11.20 *Casualty 250* (T) (4141307) 12.10 *10am Film: Prelude to a Kiss* (T) (887857) 1.15 *News* (T) (1204166) 1.55-6.00 *BBC News 24* (3453432)

BBC2

7.00am *Children's BBC Breakfast Show*: *Pingu* (7371272) 7.05 *Telebabies* (6831712) 7.30 *Snoops* (5233185) 7.50 *The Really Wild Show* (3341706) 8.18 *Rewind* (3782727) 8.20 *Taz-Mania* (5927494) 8.40 *Pooh Dot Shorts* (1867494) 8.50 *Pingu* (936378) 9.00 *Images of Disney* (7505494) 9.05 *What? Where? When? Why?* (7585630) 9.25 *The Art* (4243920) 9.45 *Wards and Pictures* (8614630) 10.00 *Telebabies* (12765) 10.30 *Numberblocks* (5168104) 10.45 *Watch* (9161659) 11.00 *Around Scotland* (3182104) 11.20 *The Geography Programme* (3038104) 11.40 *Science in Action* (8410185) 12.00 *Revisits* (513746) 12.15 *1pm Hailus Abo* (4982388) 12.30 *Working Lunch* (45920) 1.00 *True Blue* (68806524)
1.10 *War Walks* (3/6) (T) (41637920)
1.40 *Hart-Davis on History* (35560475)
2.10 *Awash with Colour* (5630524)
2.40 *News; Weather* (T) (3174814)
2.45 *Westminster* (T) (5849901)
3.50 *News; Weather* (T) (6026901)
3.55 *Key Advice* (9358291)
4.25 *Ready, Steady, Cook* (T) (6045036)
4.55 *Esther* (T) (5020201)
5.30 *Whose House?* (388)
6.00 *Star Trek: The Next Generation*: Picard is forced to confront a difficult episode from his past (T) (563017)



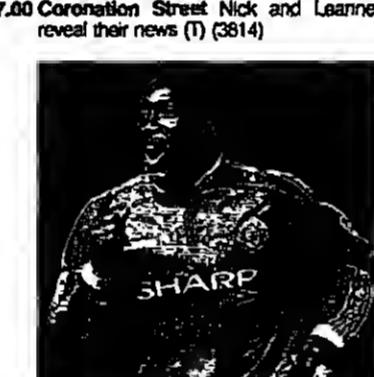
Sarah Michelle Gellar stars as the high school heroine (5.45pm)

6.45 *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*: Buffy comes to the aid of Cordelia, the school's most popular pupil (T) (267104)
7.30 *Sophie Grigson's Herbs*: Tasty ideas for a salmon and dill burger (T) (765)
8.00 *University Challenge* (T) (35048)
8.30 *Looking Good*: State-of-the-art fashion, a bargain alternative to a facelift, and a guide to applying mascara (T) (4543)
9.00 **CHOICE** *Modern Times*: Diana's Neighbours Report on why angry London residents are opposing plans to build a memorial garden commemorating the life of Diana, Princess of Wales (T) (775920)
9.50 *Trouble at the Top* A £12million project to transform a dilapidated mansion into London's first five-star club (T) (512814)
10.30 *Newsnight* (T) (302525)
11.13 *Video News Shorts* (T) (100678)
11.15 *A Living Hell* The family of a suicide victim describe the reality of living with a man depressive (3/3) (T) (70949)
11.55 *Weather* (976833)
12.00 *Despatch News* (60895)

12.30am *BBC Learning Zone*: Open University: *Rocky Shores* 1.00 *Tropical Forest* 1.30 *Managing for Biodiversity*: *Forests* 2.00 *State-of-the-Art* 2.30 *Schools*: *Science* 4.00 *Languages* 5.00 *German* 5.50 *Business* 5.50 *RCN Nursing Updates* 5.45 *Open University*: *Body Plans* 6.10 *Insect Diversity* 6.35 *Molluscs, Mechanisms and Minds*

HTV

5.30am *ITV Morning News* (25388)
6.00 *GMTV* (5824949)
9.25 *Trials* (T) (8855678)
10.30 *This Morning* (T) (44461272)
12.15pm *HTV News and Weather* (T) (4958814)
12.30 *TV Lunchtime News; Weather* (T) (4438017)
12.55 *Shortland Street*: Nick falls on his feet (9885727)
1.30 *Home and Away*: Kala leaves Summer Bay (T) (35578494)
1.55 *The Jerry Springer Show*: Outrageous talk show from America (T) (5383758)
2.40 *Wheel of Fortune* (T) (1811366)
3.10 *HTV News Headlines* (T) (4683611)
3.15 *HTV News* (T) (4629263)
3.20 *CITV*: *Mapotap's Shop* (4613475) 3.30 *Teddybears* (6973388) 3.40 *Jumanji* (9334932) 4.05 *Hey Arnold!* (6016611)
4.35 *Wildtrack* (3906123)
5.00 *Home and Away*: Kala leaves Summer Bay (T) (3738)
5.30 *WEST*: *Live and Local*: Richard Wyatt, Polly Lloyd and Simon Whity report from a family-run farm on Exmoor (814)
5.30 *WALES*: *Up Beat* (2/6) (T) (814)
5.58 *HTV Weather* (705494)
5.59 *HTV Crimestoppers* (706494)
6.00 *HTV News* (T) (727)
6.30 *HTV Evening News; Weather* (T) (307)
7.00 *Coronation Street*: Nick and Leanne reveal their news (T) (58314)



Dwight Yorks will be looking to add to United's two goal lead (7.30pm)

7.30 *The Big Match* — *Uefa Internazionale v Manchester United* (kick-off 7.45pm): Bob Wilson introduces vital coverage of this vital European Cup quarter-final second leg at the San Siro in Milan. Subsequent programmes are subject to change (T) (511185)
10.00 *Birth Rows 2000*: *On Your Marks*: Introduction for couples planning a Millennium baby (734038)
10.05 *Footie Play*: Cheating in the sports world (T) (420494)
11.00 *ITV Nightly News; Weather* (T) (587017)
11.20 *HTV News and Weather* (T) (572746)
11.30 *The Big Match*: Highlights of tonight's second legs of the European Cup quarter-finals (362038)
12.35 *A Taste for Killing* (1992): Two spoilt graduates working on an oil rig find their only friend has an ulterior move for helping them. Thriller, starring Michael Biehn. Directed by Lou Antonio (738677)
2.10 *The Big Match*: *Dynamo Kiev v Real Madrid* (T) (5001839) 5.30 *Countdown* (5183433) 12.30pm *Planned Plant* (T) (57874645) 1.00 *The Afternoon Line* (5788540) 1.30 *The Cheltenham Festival* (54912833) 4.30 *Dishes* (T) (6726543) 5.00 *Planned Plant* (T) (5001838) 5.30 *Countdown* (T) (67040123) 6.00 *Newyddion* 6. (T) (53686456) 8.10 *Henio* (T) (8855659) 7.00 *Powdyhindle* (T) (5021853) 7.30 *Newyddion* 8. (T) (5787464) 10.00 *Fermio* (T) (50007253)
8.30 *Hawilo* (T) (5022638) 9.00 *ER* (T) (6727272) 8.00 *Brookside* (T) (72553746)
10.35 *Sex and the City* (T) (35588549) 11.05 *Michael Moore: The Awful Truth* (T) (9276111) 12.05am *The Cheltenham Festival* (69116864) 12.40 *boardstupid* goes skiing (4385748) 1.45 *Football Italia*: *Mezzanotte* (52627376) 4.35 *Trans World Sport* (40061857) 5.10 *So Graham* (T) (7369878)
5.30 *So Graham* (T) (7369878) 12.00pm *boardstupid* Snowboarding news (T) (5182854)

5.30am *ITV News and Weather* (T) (5779524)
7.00 *The Big Breakfast* (5778223) 9.00 *Yogolution: The Mix* (5833765) 9.30 *Book Box* (49886104) 10.00 *Stage All About Us* (6176961)
11.20-11.30 *Meridian News; Weather* (T) (572746) 5.00am-5.30 *Freescreen* (T) (68234)

CENTRAL

As HTV West except:
12.20-12.30pm *Central News; Weather* (71982)
12.55 *Home and Away* (4446036)
1.25 *The Jerry Springer Show* (4001630)
2.10-2.40 *Earth Point* (56537678)
3.15-3.20 *Central News; Weather* (4692982)
5.00 *Shortland Street* (514)
5.30 *Home and Away* (4446036)
6.00 *Central News at 8*; *Stv; Weather* (727)



Alex Kingston stars as the under-pressure Dr Elizabeth Corday (5pm)

9.00am *ITV West* except: 12.15pm-12.30pm *Meridian News; Weather* (4692983) 5.30 *Country News* (5164547) 6.00-6.30 *Meridian Tonight* (T) (727) 7.20-7.30 *Meridian Weather* (610543)
11.20-11.30 *Meridian News; Weather* (T) (572746) 5.00am-5.30 *Freescreen* (T) (68234)

5.30am *ITV West* except: 12.19pm *Anglia Air Watch* (7118017) 12.20-12.30 *Anglia News and Weather* (7197982) 5.30 *Whitbread* (613) (T

CRICKET 45

Lara rewarded
for his
leading role



SPORT

WEDNESDAY MARCH 17 1999

RUGBY UNION 46

Catt keeps his
balance after
latest recall



Lightning strikes twice as brilliant Irish champion takes opening-day Festival honours

Istabraq hurdles into the realms of greatness

BY ALAN LEE, RACING CORRESPONDENT

THE race was over in the time that it takes to change gear in a car or to shake the reins of a horse. In that seminal moment, as Charlie Swan asked a searching question and Istabraq gave a breathtaking response, the doubts were silenced, months of speculation seemed foolish and the stature of one of the greatest hurdlers was established.

They were approaching the final turn in the Smurfit Champion Hurdle, Cheltenham's daunting hill ahead, when Swan engaged the weapon he knew that the rest could not counter. Overdrive. As Istabraq quickened, the roar from the 45,000 crowd drowned out all but the conviction of the jockey in front. "When I kicked, I thought nothing will go past us now," Swan said.

Nothing, in fact, came close. Istabraq crossed the final flight in glorious isolation and though the eventual margin was 3½ lengths, compared with 12 over the same runner-up, Theatreworld, last year, only the most grudging, sceptical soul would suggest that this is a horse past his best.

Swan had no cause to get serious with his horse; indeed, he had plenty of time to perfect his victory salute. The proximity of Theatreworld, his bridesmaid of a stablemate, finishing second for the third successive year, was deceptive. And in the sunlit winner's enclosure, as a section of the



crowd sang a self-composed ode to the champion, nobody cared anyway.

Istabraq — an Arabic word meaning to run like lightning — fulfils the bold confidence of his naming. He is the first horse to retain the hurdling title since See You. Then in 1986 and few doubt that he can further emulate that horse by completing the hat-trick next year. Coral and the Tote last night offered only 6-4 against it, though such odds will not look so cramped if he makes it back next March.

He is so clearly a class above his generation that this race had intrigued not in the usual anticipatory skirmish of



Swan leads Istabraq through the adoring Cheltenham throng into the winner's enclosure after their emphatic triumph

what might win but over whether anything could possibly beat the odds-on favourite. Other, perhaps, than himself.

Swan and Aidan O'Brien, analysts both, had searched for weaknesses. At 29, O'Brien still looks like a sixth-former let out of school for the day, but his waif-like innocence no longer deceives. A training phenomenon, he mused the other day that Istabraq may even have too much speed now, so that the trip could be beyond him. He was happy to be proved wrong, even if the slack early pace assuredly helped.

Swan's concerns were that Istabraq should not boil over in the preliminaries, as he did before winning at Cheltenham as a novice, and that the brav-

RESULT

1. Istabraq 4-9 fav
2. Theatreworld 16-1
3. French Holly 11-2
4. Mister Morose 100-1

ery of his jumping should not bring him down. The horse did sweat freely, but on such a day he was not alone in that, and he jumped impeccably other than fiddling the last two. "If he'd jumped them better we'd have won even easier," Swan said. "I didn't want to hit the front so soon, but I really had no choice. He has such speed now."

French Holly was far from disgraced in third, making a race of it until that last turn.

He was overhauled by Theatreworld on the run to the line and Ferdy Murphy, his trainer, said: "The way we rode him may have cost us second place." These, though, are very different horses. The giant French Holly may now become a star over fences, but Istabraq will never venture beyond the smaller obstacles. At 7, there is neither cause nor temptation to think of change, let alone rest or retirement.

As with all great horses, especially Irish ones, he touches the lives of many. J. P. McManus, his charismatic owner, said: "What Istabraq is doing controls how many of us run our lives — myself, my family and friends, but others, too. People want to know his plans before they book their holidays." McManus had not backed Istabraq — "at those odds it wouldn't have made me feel any better" — but he did admit to being a financial casualty of his two heavily backed runners in the opening Citroën Supreme Novices Hurdle. Now, though, he was feeling no pain.

Owner and trainer will take time to debate plans, but the indication is that Istabraq may run next at Punchestown rather than at Aintree, the scene of his only defeat in his past 16 races. Wherever he goes, Swan will go with him, now until their mutual retirement. "I'll be back next year and for a fourth and fifth year if it happens," he said. "So long as he is here, I will go on riding."

Ferguson's taunts provoke angry riposte from Inter

FROM MATT DICKINSON
IN MILAN

IF IT was a reaction that Alex Ferguson was after, Internazionale took the bait yesterday. Increasingly riled by the Manchester United manager's incessant references to their habitual skulduggery, the Italians responded with a few acerbic words of their own.

Quite why Ferguson, whose team lead 2-0 from the first leg, should have wanted to stir such hostility in the build-up to the European Cup quarter-final tonight, is not immediately apparent. Perhaps he calculates that Inter have more to lose from an ill-tempered game? Maybe he thinks his team will respond best by walking into a whirlwind? Whatever the reasoning, one hopes that he has read the situation correctly because he has turned his team and particularly himself, into headline villains in Milan.

Mircea Lucescu, the Inter coach, believes that Ferguson risked trouble among supporters by his comments before the first tie, and the Romanian's highly-public retort yesterday ensured that the eardrums will be close to bursting as 80,000 supporters — at least 4,000 of them from Manchester — cram into the San Siro tonight.

"I always believed in the English sense of fair play."

Lucescu said, "but then Alex Ferguson is from Scotland. And they don't have fair play there apparently. I have a great admiration for him as a coach, so I am very sad that someone like him should make these comments and that a club of Manchester United's stature should be involved in this way. I always thought United had a certain style."

"Before the game in England, some of the messages might have incited problems in the crowd. It is a sad thing and a bad thing, but maybe Ferguson has done it because he is afraid. That is what you have to ask yourself. Surely there can be no other explanation."

"I always believed in the English sense of fair play."

Giggs and Ronaldo, Keane and Simeone on the same pitch, the hope must be that this game, like the first at Old Trafford, is remembered for the number of chances rather than bookings. With Inter needing to score at least twice, the onus is on the Italians to attack. United, meanwhile, know no other way.

The principal change from the first leg is, of course, the appearance of Ronaldo, who has scored one goal in five European Cup games this season compared with Dwight Yorke's seven in seven, and who remains preoccupied by health concerns and a lack of match fitness.

That did not stop Giuseppe Bergomi, the Inter captain, claiming yesterday that "emotional presence means so much to us", but Jaap Stam, Henning Berg and Ronny Johnsen have already faced the world's best striker at international level and none appears traumatised by the experience.

United have lost all six previous matches in Italy, scoring only once in the process, but Ferguson stuck to his prediction yesterday that his team would add to that solitary Norman Whiteside strike. Inter would then require four goals to go through, a task that would stretch even a fit Ronaldo. And the Brazilian is definitely not that.



Lucescu: public retort

Tears flow as Pitman calls it a day

BY ALAN LEE

EMOTIONAL scenes are commonplace in the winner's enclosure at Cheltenham but the tears do not often flow before a race has been run. Yesterday was different. The Festival crowd was enjoying the spring sunshine, an hour before the off, when Jenny Pitman arrived at the microphone to announce her retirement.

She was dressed in scarlet because, she said, she felt so pale, but it quickly seemed that black would have been more appropriate to the mood she would create. After two introductory comments she choked on her words. "This will be my last Cheltenham as a professional trainer," she managed to say, whereupon the thousands on the terracing around the parade ring burst into prolonged, spontaneous applause.

Retirements need not be sad but they are invariably emotional. The farewell of Mrs J. Pitman, OBE, of Upper Lambourn, was a rival to that of Mr H. D. Bird, of Barnsley, in the white handerchief stakes.

Pitman, 52, had somehow kept her decision secret and the impact was all the greater for that. The first lady of training, who numbers two Gold Cup and two Grand National winners on her glittering CV, had chosen her own way of announcing the end and, once she had rediscovered the power of speech, she did so with characteristic eloquence.

Her Weathercock House yard will be taken over by her son, Mark, who himself was close to tears as his mother explained the bombshell, starting with a reassurance. Only last year, she was having treatment for thyroid cancer but she insisted yesterday, "I'm not ill, so don't think there is bad news following this."

"I am not going for any reason other than it's the right thing to do. Mark has outgrown his own yard, so this is for him. I've loved my job, that is the difficulty. I signed some papers at breakfast this morning, handing over the yard to Mark, and I think I had to do it then or I'd have bolted out. I started crying at six this morning and I hoped

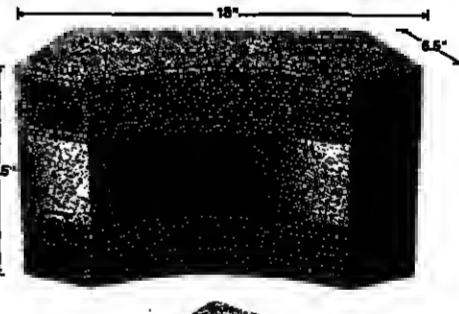
Simon Barnes, page 1

sponsible for Esha Ness's "victory" in the void race of 1993.

Burrough Hill Ltd, the dark, dominant steeplechaser of 1984, won her Gold Cup for the first time but one sensed, yesterday, that her greatest moment came in watching Mark partner Garrison Savannah to win the race in 1991. "That was very special," she said feelingly. "But I've got so many memories that money can't buy. I haven't got a lot of money but I feel I'm one of the richest people here." She would like one more memory, a valedictory winner at the greatest of all meetings, and how apt it would be if Ginger Fox, who runs in the last race tomorrow, could oblige.

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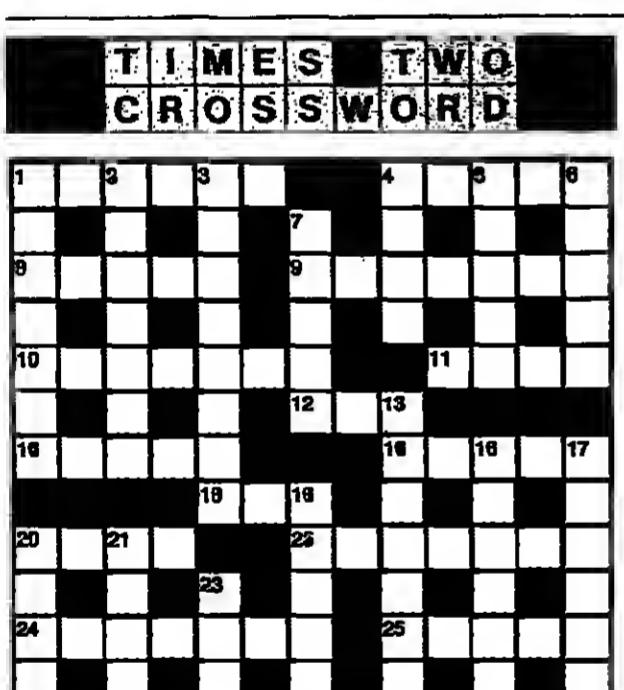
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ACROSS
1 In words (6)
4 Be injured; draw fluid from (5)
8 In good condition; sea inlet (5)
9 Antarctic bird (7)
10 A soft roll (7)
11 Flout (authority) (4)
12 Condensation (3)
14 Bring to bear (5)
15 Made eyes at (5)
18 The feeling of self (3)
20 Risky (bonds); poor-quality (food) (4)
22 Tries to date (4,3)
24 Bohuslav —, Cz. composer (7)
25 Die by water (5)
26 Fashion; title (5)
27 Spiral round (6)

DOWN
1 In sight (7)
2 Regular habits (7)
3 Resign throne (8)
4 Gang; sounds like forbidden (4)
5 Escape notice of (5)
6 Drab, dirty (5)
7 Rate of progress (5)
13 Ordinary, for normal use (8)
16 Three Beethoven overtures (7)
17 Lessening of (political) tension (7)
19 Fibre from old rope (5)
20 Writer Henry, outlaw Jesse (5)
21 Anxious (5)
23 Quote, refer to (4)

SOLUTION TO NO 1666
ACROSS: 1 Plagiarism 8 Tenfold 9 to all 10 Hook
11 Attorney 13 Uncle 14 Fifty 16 Chestnut 17 Bier
20 Swear 21 Gouging 22 Ascendancy
DOWN: 1 Pitch 2 Arne of Cleves 3 Iris 4 Relate
5 Spin-offs 6 Malnutrition 7 Clayey 12 Leontards
13 Upset 15 Budgie 18 Rugby 19 Fund

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